

AFTER THE BATTLE



**ADVERSARIES MEET AGAIN
THE DRIVE ON PRÜM-FEBRUARY 1945
BATTLE OF HONG KONG**

Number 46

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Front Cover: Former adversaries in battle in 1941
— Sergeant Howard Squire and Hauptmann
Herbert Ihlefeld — meet again on the same spot
in 1984. (Steve Casely)

Centre pages: The Churchill Mk II recovered from
Stainburn Moor Forest in June 1984 begins its
journey to the Museum of Army Transport at
Beverley, Yorkshire. (Bob Grundy)

Back Cover: E Battery, 1st Regiment, Royal Horse
Artillery, re-create history at Péronnes, Belgium,
seventy years to the minute after the same unit
fired the first shell in World War I. (Sergeant Phil
Cadman)

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THE BATTLE OF HONG KONG

BY BRIGADIER G. D. JOHNSON, OBE, MC



Ever since the fall of Hong Kong after an eighteen-day battle in December 1941, there have been persistent rumours that the coastal defence guns never or hardly fired. Naturally being coast defence artillery they faced seaward like F1 gun — a 9.2in Mk 10 gun on Mk 5 mounting — shown above, one of the three at Mount Davis Battery. But all could traverse almost 360 degrees, their field of fire inland only restricted by high ground, and early in 1940 the firing arc of every coast gun in the colony was examined and wherever possible fixed ranges and bearings were taken of likely targets on the mainland. Each target was individually numbered, F2 gun for example had about 29 listed. It fired on many of these during the battle and others in Kowloon on the mainland (see map page 2) right up until the surrender. Stanley Battery, too, even fired at Japanese troops on Hong Kong Island itself. Photo taken by Bob Yates who served at Mount Davis during the battle. Today the empty gun pit stands piled with rubbish.



In 1841 the British Foreign Secretary Lord Palmerston dismissed Hong Kong as 'a barren rock with hardly a house on it'. That was the year in which China ceded the Island to Great Britain and Palmerston was not far out in his description. He was talking of an Island off the south coast of China, some eleven miles in length and covering only thirty-two square miles in all. High inhospitable granite hills stood proud from the South China Sea. Their rock-strewn slopes, covered with stunted bushes and coarse grass, fell in steep folds to the water and were split with numerous, sheer-sided, winding gullies and ravines. It

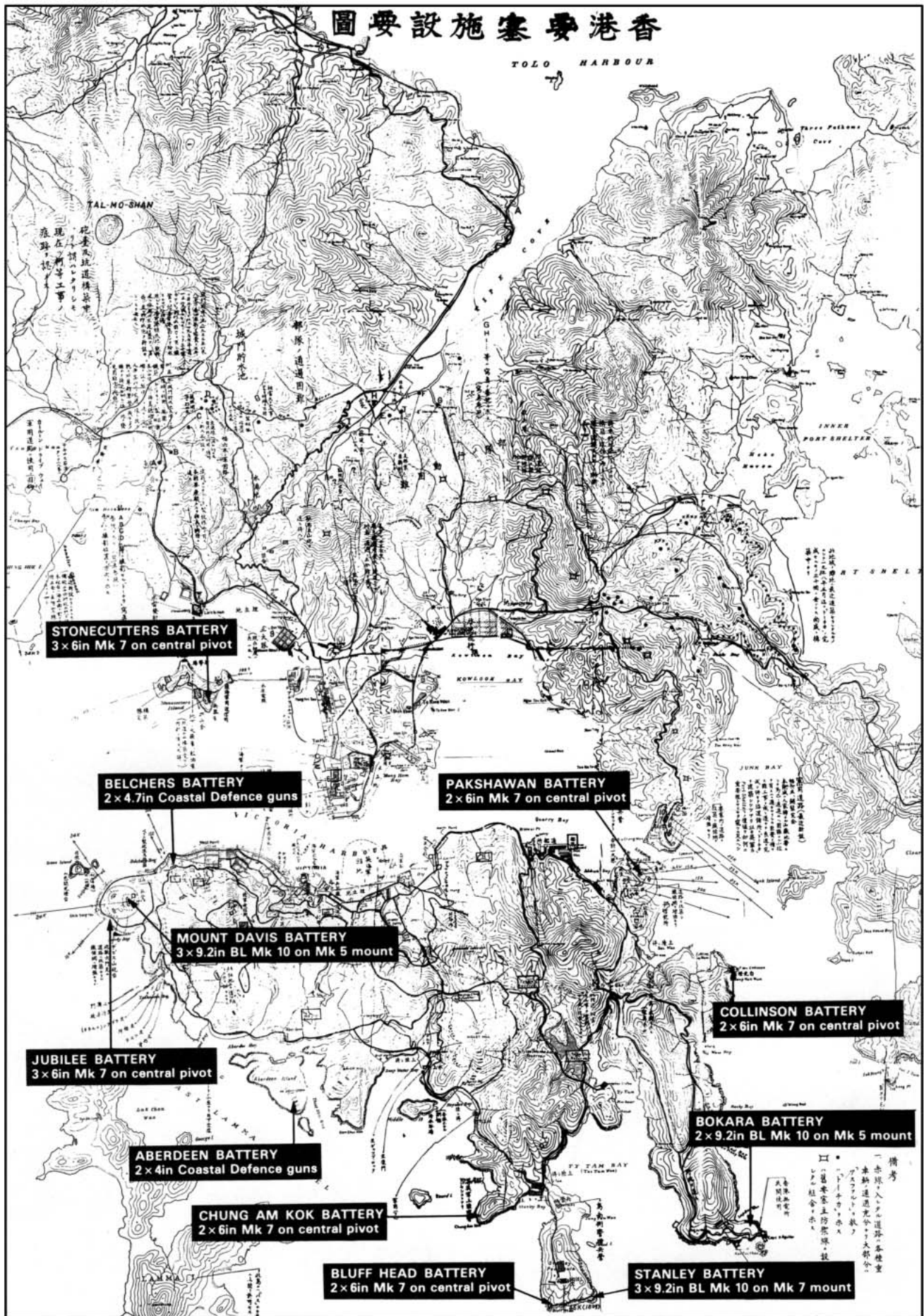
Hong Kong Island under fire probably from the Japanese 1st Battalion, 14th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment. This is the Central District and Victoria Harbour with the highest point on the Island — Victoria Peak (554 metres) — dominating the area. The development of the colony since the end of the war is astonishing making comparison photographs of the battle somewhat difficult!

was a haunt of fisherfolk and pirates; swelteringly hot in summer, cold in winter and damply unpleasant in the spring.

The geography had not changed a hundred years later, nor had the climate, but by 1940 Hong Kong had long surpassed the expectations of its founders as a trading station through which the western nations, in particu-

lar Britain, made commercial gain by traffic with their giant neighbour to the north. By then the capital and commercial centre of the colony, Victoria was firmly established in the north-west of the Island beneath an elegant backdrop of merchants' grand houses on the Peak. In the centre of the north shore lay the Royal Naval Dockyard and Murray Barracks.





Map reproduced from a secret Japanese Military General Staff Office survey of Hong Kong and its defences dated August 1938.



F2, the gun on which Bob Yates served, photographed just prior to the outbreak of war. Bob managed to conceal these snapshots throughout four years' captivity.

Further east the teeming slums and narrow streets of Wanchai ran on to Lyemun where Pakshawan Battery with its two 6-inch guns guarded the eastern entrance to the great harbour. Elsewhere on the Island, habitation tended to concentrate along the narrow road which wound its way around the coastline, and along the two north-south roads passing through the Wong Nei Chong and Tai Tam Gaps. At selected points around the coast, batteries of various calibres were sited to protect the approaches from every direction (see map opposite).

The colony had grown, too, since its foundation. In 1860 China ceded a small portion of the mainland opposite Victoria. Called Gow Lung, or Nine Dragons, by the Cantonese, it soon became known to the British as Kowloon. In 1898 negotiations were concluded for a ninety-nine year lease of territory on the mainland, bounded on the north by the Shumchun River. In 1940 the New Territories, as the additional area was called, was still a pleasant, hilly, rural area, sparsely-populated, although the city of Kowloon had grown into a commercial centre in its own right around the dock area. Two roads linked Kowloon with Fanling, near the frontier, one running westwards around Castle Peak and the other eastwards through Tai Po. Both skirted the flanks of the Tai Mo Shan massif containing the highest peak in the colony. There was one aerodrome for both

civil and military planes at Kai Tak to the east of Kowloon. During its first hundred years as a Crown colony the population of Hong Kong has risen from around 6,000 to more than a million and a half of whom probably no more than 25,000 were European expatriates.

THE STRATEGIC BACKGROUND

In 1937, as England grew to accept the inevitability of war with Germany, the Chiefs-of-Staff considered the defence of Hong Kong in that eventuality and decided that the most practical proposition would be to leave the garrison at its then level of four battalions, and hope to reinforce it with a division from Singapore in the event of an attack by the Japanese, through mainland China. Work accordingly started on defensive lines to be manned by this augmented force. A line of pillboxes was planned along the hills behind Kowloon, to be known by the splendid name of the Gin Drinkers Line, not so much from the habits of the soldiers who were to man it as by virtue of the fact that it began in Gin Drinkers Bay, the scene of happily alcoholic expatriate picnic parties in the good weather. The centre and lynch-pin of the line was to be the Shingmun Redoubt. Planned and built as a complex of deep, inter-connecting trenches and bunkers, all with concrete overhead cover, the Redoubt controlled the southern end of the Jubilee Reservoir and prevented



Bob Yates on guard outside the battery in 1941. In 1980 he returned to the same spot, directly opposite the guardroom, where a solemn duty was enacted; the earnest wish of almost every serviceman — to relieve oneself in the centre of the guardroom floor — a duty duly performed with relish thirty-nine years later!



During the battle a Japanese shell penetrated the fortress plotting room. Fortunately it was a dud but the damage, examined here by Philip Bruce, the local expert on the Hong



Kong fortifications, was still considerable. Bob Yates remembers clearly reading the 'RL' manufacturer's mark on another: the Japs were firing shells supplied by the Woolwich Arsenal!



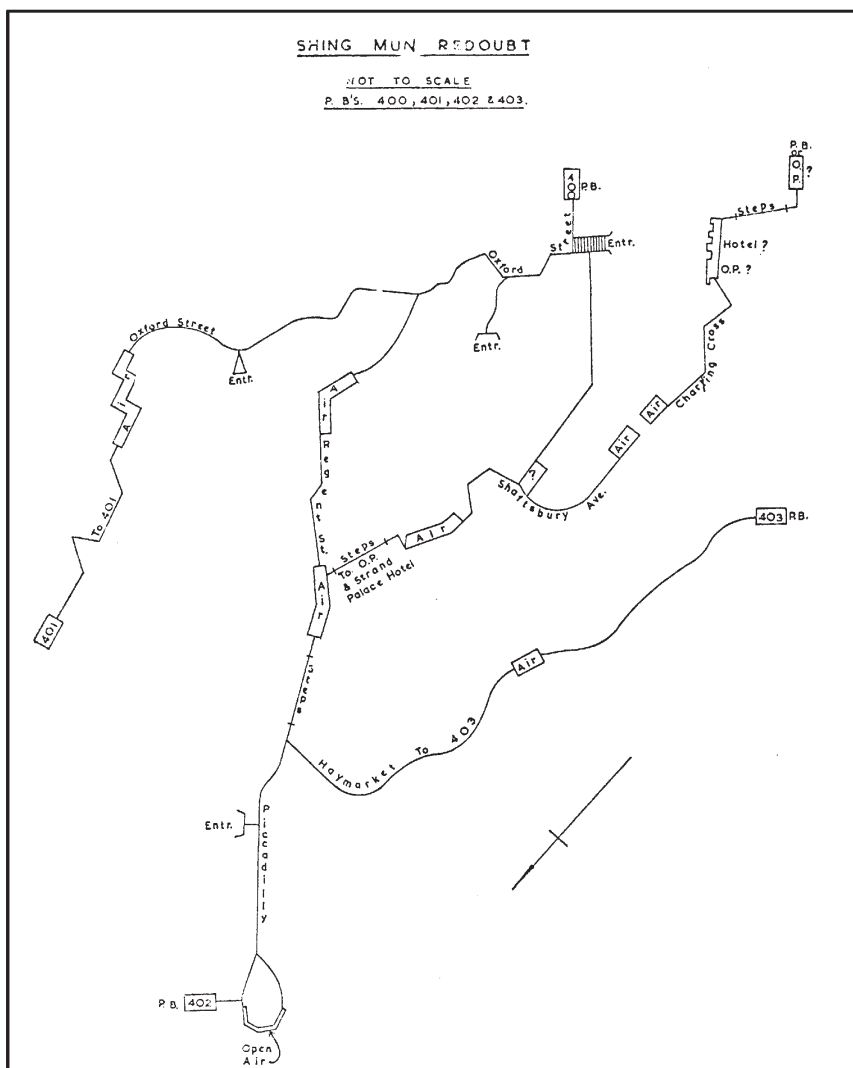
The Shingmun Redoubt was the lynch-pin of the Gin Drinkers Line in the hills behind Kowloon in the New Territories. Located at the southern end of the Jubilee Reservoir (also called the Shingmun Reservoir), it should be emphasised that in no way should it be compared with other great fixed defences of concrete and steel construction such as the Maginot or Siegfried Lines in Europe.

access to Kowloon. Work on the line and on other defence projects was slow. In times of peace, governments are loath to grant money for defence purposes, and nowhere is this self-defeating trait more evident than in a colony which exists for the sole purpose that its inhabitants may make money out of trade. The declaration of war with Germany halted work on the Gin Drinkers Line altogether and the China Squadron, consisting of submarines, cruisers and an aircraft carrier, was withdrawn when Italy entered the war to reinforce western fleets and the defence of Britain took absolute priority on aircraft production.

THE BRITISH FORCES

In July 1941 Major-General C. M. Maltby, MC, was appointed General Officer Commanding in Hong Kong. He was a highly thought of officer of the Indian Army, who had already distinguished himself as Commandant of the Indian Staff College and as a District Commander. He was a fit, smallish officer with the conventional military moustache and short hair, and a reputation for being a straightforward, practical soldier. Maltby had a habit of spending his leisure time walking his staff officers over the hills of the colony, studying the deployment of the forces at his command should the Japanese attack, for the prospect of war had come gradually closer to Hong Kong as the Japanese tightened their grip on Southern China. By mid-1941 their forces had closed up to the Hong Kong frontier, and Maltby's staff walks were conducted with some seriousness.

At that stage the GOC had four regular battalions at his disposal: 2nd Battalion, The Royal Scots; 1st Battalion, The Middlesex Regiment; 5th/7th Rajputs and 2nd/14th Punjabis. The Royal Scots have the distinction of being the senior British infantry regiment of the Line and the 2nd Battalion had arrived from India in 1936. Unfortunately for them, the more experienced officers and men were with the 1st Battalion in Europe, time for training had been insufficient and the battalion had a high sick rate from malaria. The Middlesex had been abroad for ten years and had arrived in Hong Kong in 1937, where they were converted to a medium machine gun battalion tasked with manning pillboxes and static defences around the Island. The Rajputs arrived in Hong Kong in August 1940 but had twice been called upon to send ex-





ADVANCE OF THE
JAPANESE 228th INF. REG.



Most armies when stationed abroad import names from their home country — the British more than most. In the event the Shingmun Redoubt, insufficiently manned, fell within a few hours.

perienced officers and NCOs back to India for the expanding Army there. They were to be brought up to strength by a large number of hastily trained recruits in October 1941. The Punjabis were in a similar state to the Rajputs, suffering a deficiency of experienced soldiers, mortars and training ammunition.

In addition to the usual number of support troops, Maltby had under his command a local force, the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps. The Volunteers were manned, in the same way as the Territorial Army in Britain, by public-spirited men who were willing to take up arms in the defence of their homes and families. Conscription for all European British males in the colony was introduced in July 1940. In addition to British and Chinese, their ranks included Frenchmen, Russians, Portuguese, Scandinavians and Americans, and even a company of men over 55 who, outside the normal terms of service, had formed a company of their own. On mobilisation, these great-hearted men formed companies of infantrymen, engineers and artillery and what they lacked in military knowledge they made up for in dedication and enthusiasm.

Finally, there were two regiments of coast artillery, a regiment of the Hong Kong Singapore Regiment Royal Artillery, its batteries manned by Sikhs and Punjabi Mussulmen, and one RA anti-aircraft regiment equipped with 3-in and 3.7in AA and Bofors.

For the air defence of Hong Kong Maltby had a tiny force of five aircraft: two Walrus amphibians and three Vickers Vildebeeste torpedo bombers. All were obsolescent, with poor top speeds. The nearest British airfield was in Malaya, some 1,500 miles away.

The Royal Navy was more impressive. After the cruisers and submarines had been withdrawn, there remained a destroyer, HMS *Thracian*, eight motor torpedo boats, two gunboats and a few auxiliary patrol craft. The Navy had prepared a secondary naval base at Aberdeen on the south of the Island, sheltered from gunfire from the mainland by the high hills around Victoria Peak, and they had also mined the sea approaches from the west.

As 1941 wore on and General Maltby finalised his plans, a welcome addition was about to be made to his force. On September 15 Churchill agreed to a proposal by the Chiefs-of-Staff that Canada be asked to send a brigade headquarters and two infantry battalions to Hong Kong. This reinforcement, thought the Chiefs, might be sufficient to



Charing Cross — the flooded entrance.



Shrapnel damage, the command bunker.



Looking in on Oxford Street — one of the covered trenches visible on the panorama (opposite) beneath the pylon.



Here come the Canadians. Fortunately the banyan trees alongside Nathan Road, the main road in Kowloon, still survive. Behind is Kowloon Park — the edge of which is being developed with more shops — hence the hoarding! (IWM)



ensure the successful defence of the colony. Canada agreed to the request a fortnight later and on October 27 Brigadier J. K. Lawson, MC, an experienced regular officer, embarked at Vancouver with the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers. Both battalions were militia and had been graded by the Canadian military authorities as insufficiently trained and not fit for operations. None of the soldiers had trained on the mortar or anti-tank rifle. Both battalions were only brought up to establishment just before sailing by combing the training camps. Many of the men hastily joining the two battalions had not even finished their recruit training. As a final problem for Brigadier Lawson the ship on which his troops were to sail had only room for 20 of their 212 vehicles. These were consigned to another ship which was to follow and, in the event, were never to reach them. Later in the war, a Royal Commission investigating the provision of these apparently unsuitable troops was told by the Canadian CGS that all first-line battalions were earmarked for Europe and that it had been believed at the time that there would be opportunity in Hong Kong to put right the deficiencies in equipment and training. The men themselves were certainly fit and enthusiastic, and excited much favourable com-

ment when they were marched past General Maltby on their arrival in Hong Kong on November 16.

THE DEFENCE PLAN

The arrival of the Canadians allowed the GOC to review his plans. He now decided he was strong enough to fight on the mainland and work started belatedly once again on the Gin Drinkers Line. Maltby's final plan envisaged the line being held by a Mainland Brigade under Brigadier C. Wallis, lately Commanding Officer of the 5th/7th Rajputs. The Royal Scots were to hold the left of the line, including the Shingmun Redoubt, the Punjabis the centre and the Rajputs the right. A covering force of C Company, 2nd/14th Rajputs, under Major G. E. Gray, with four Bren carriers, two armoured cars and some volunteer sappers were to complete demolitions designed to slow up the enemy's advance to the line. The Mainland Brigade was tasked with holding for at least a week, while dockyard and oil installations were destroyed, before withdrawing through Devil's Peak and across the Lyemun Channel to the Island.

Brigadier Lawson was given command of the Island Brigade, which included his own

two Canadian battalions and the machine gunners of the Middlesex. He was ordered to cover the coastline of the Island to prevent an enemy landing.

Despite the many deficiencies in his force, General Maltby now felt so confident in his ability to defend Hong Kong that he began to envisage the colony as a spring-board for future operations in China. On December 3, he visited the border posts and, observing the Japanese soldiers on duty across the frontier saw nothing to change the officially held view, with which he concurred, that the Japanese soldiers were scruffy, ill-trained, and incapable of operating at night. He agreed, too, with intelligence reports which stated that the Japanese had no intention of attacking Hong Kong in the foreseeable future.

However, as the GOC observed the Japanese border guards with his binoculars, their commanders were finalising plans to seize the colony; plans which were to be put into action only five days later and which would come to fruition on Christmas Day with the unconditional surrender of the British forces.

THE JAPANESE

Japanese plans for the invasion of Hong Kong had, in fact, been steadily put together for some years. There were many Japanese residents and a number were spies in the pay of Colonel Suzuki at the Japanese Consulate. Wanchai brothel girls, the Japanese jeweller in the Queens Arcade and others like them supplied tit-bits of useful information to supplement the Colonel's hard factual intelligence which pinpointed the pillboxes and signal centres on the ground. The barber at the famous Peninsula Hotel even turned up after the surrender as Commandant of the Stanley Internment Camp, complete in the uniform of a Lieutenant Commander in the Japanese Navy. Other Japanese laid concrete plinths in merchants' warehouses on the Kowloon waterfront from which artillery guns were later to fire with devastating effect onto British positions on the Island. The arrival of the Canadians confused somewhat the Japanese information on British deployment plans but even so a Japanese officer killed in the fighting was found to have on him a map printed in Canton in November 1941 which showed all the pillboxes and gun positions ringed in red ink. In short, in any country where people are allowed to walk around freely, coast defence guns can never be fully concealed and can also be seen quite easily from passing ships.

The Japanese Commander-in-Chief in South China, Lieutenant-General Takaishi Sakai, had designated the 38th Division under Major-General Sano to carry out the attack. Sano had three regiments each of three battalions. Contrary to popular belief in Hong Kong the soldiers were battle-hardened, experienced troops, well-versed in night fighting, and tough and tenacious in attack.

Japanese plans were aimed at punching a hole in the Gin Drinkers Line and making a swift breakthrough to the waterline, thus cutting off and mopping up at leisure the battalions left on the line. It was thought that this would then force the surrender of the troops on the Island, especially as capture of the Jubilee Reservoir in front of the Shingmun Redoubt would reduce the Island's water supply.

The divisional plan to achieve this aim was as follows. To start with two regiments would cross the frontier and, spearheaded by reconnaissance troops, would drive swiftly ahead, bypassing pockets of opposition until they closed up with the main force. On the right (or west) 230 Battalion, under Colonel Toshishige Shoji, would skirt around the western slopes of Tai Mo Shan, cutting off any British forces on the Tai Po road, and would then smash their way through the Royal Scots at the



Shingmun Redoubt before heading for Kowloon. In the centre, 228 Regiment, under Colonel Teihichi Doi, was to break through the Punjabis and capture Kai Tak. Once these two thrusts had succeeded 229 Regiment, under Colonel Tanaka, was ordered to effect a surprise crossing of Tide Cove in sampans, then to push through the Rajputs to capture the high ground at Tates Cairn overlooking the Lyemun Channel.

Eighty aircraft were detailed to support the attack and the Japanese counted on a three to one superiority in field guns.

Great efforts were made to conceal offensive preparations. Battalions concentrated in the hills well back from the frontier and nothing was done to alert the British posts on the frontier. Nevertheless tension mounted in Hong Kong. Preparations went ahead for placing barbed wire around the fighting positions and ammunition was pre-positioned. Wives had earlier been sent home or enrolled as auxiliary nurses, Chinese refugees filtered across the border and finally on December 7, 1941, General Maltby received information that caused him to turn out the troops. By 6.00 p.m. that night the garrison was in its battle positions.

General Maltby reviews the Canadians as they pass the Peninsula Hotel. (IWM)



The tables turned at Fanling. The railway station, three miles inside British territory, was one of the first objectives taken by



the Japanese. In 1945, when this picture was taken, British troops herded the former enemy on trains to Kowloon. (IWM)



'At 8.00 a.m. the loud crescendo of an air raid warning ominously disturbed the bright sunny morning. Practice alerts had never taken place at that hour before . . . The loud rattle of anti-aircraft machine gun fire mingled with the explosions of falling bombs. So sudden was the attack that some officers at first thought that "the bloody Royal Air Force were practising

for a display".' From 'The Lasting Honour' by Lieutenant Colonel Oliver Lindsay, Grenadier Guards, author of two of the major books on the battle, the other titled 'At the Going Down of the Sun'. With Mount Parker in the background, the formation is flying west over Causeway Bay, and heavily populated districts of Wanchai and Central on Hong Kong Island's northern shore.

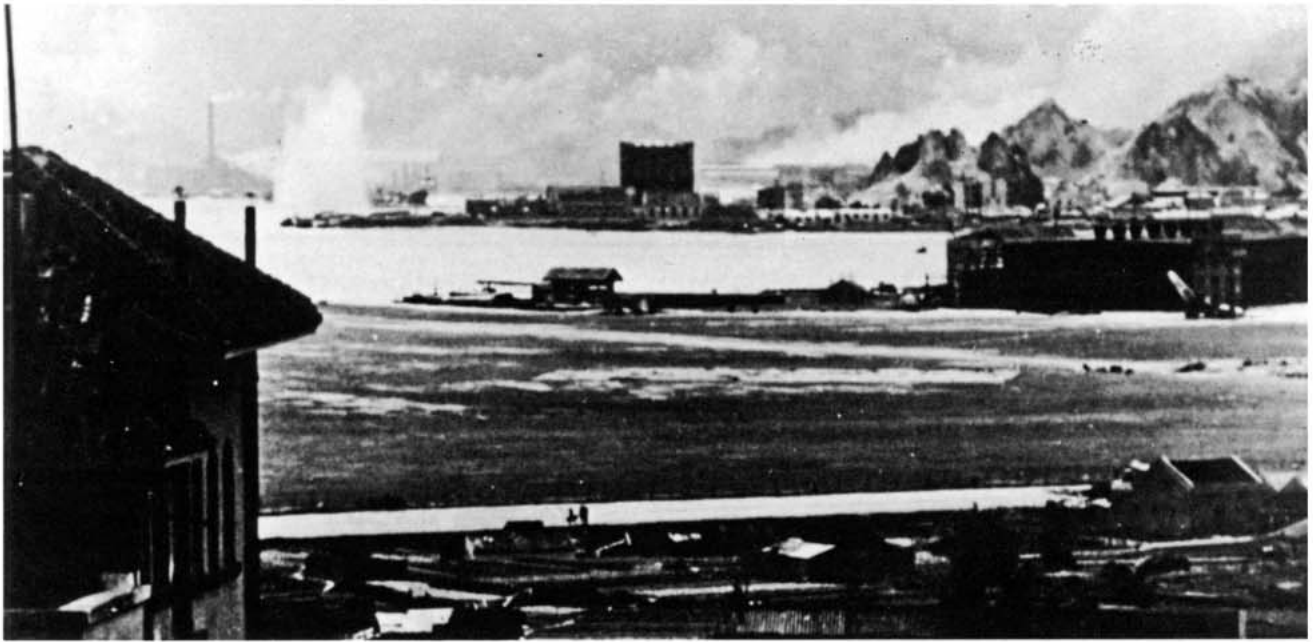
THE INVASION BEGINS

The first thing most people in Hong Kong knew of the onslaught which was about to fall on them was at 8.00 a.m. on the morning of Monday, December 8 (the timing was exactly the same as the attack on Pearl Harbour but the International Date Line changed the day), when the wail of air raid sirens disturbed their breakfasts. There had been many practices before but this time it was the real thing. The Japanese planes swooped over Kai Tak Airport and the thud of bombs and the clatter of machine guns sent people rushing to their windows or to their war posts. The air attack was totally unexpected. The old planes of the Royal Air Force were lined up on the tarmac and all but one were destroyed immediately. Within minutes all forms of British air reconnaissance had vanished in smoke and flame. Their warplanes now switched to their secondary objective, the Canadian barracks at Sham Shui Po to the west of Kowloon. Luckily almost all the troops were deployed and casualties were limited to two soldiers wounded.

Unlike the civilians, most of the garrison were aware that they were at war before the air attack commenced. General Maltby's war headquarters was in an underground bunker complex at Fortress HQ. The duty officer on that Monday morning, Major C. R. Boxer, was an intelligence officer and a fluent Japanese speaker. Monitoring Tokyo radio he picked up at 4.45 a.m. a broadcast to Japanese nationals that war had been declared on America and Great Britain. The covering force of C Company 2nd/14th Punjab was ordered to commence the programme of prepared demolitions.



The Royal Air Force wiped out at Kai Tak. On the evening of December 7, HM Government learned that Japanese forces, without previous warning either in the form of a declaration of war or an ultimatum, had struck at Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong. The following day the Foreign Office instructed the British Ambassador in Tokyo, in true diplomatic language, to inform the Imperial Japanese Government that a state of war existed between the two countries. As Winston Churchill commented after the war: 'Some people did not like this ceremonial style. But after all when you have to kill a man it costs nothing to be polite.'



THE COVERING FORCE

At 5.00 a.m. work started on the demolitions on the Kowloon-Canton railway bridge across the Shumchun River. An extraordinary situation then arose. As the Punjabis and Volunteer sappers worked on their task of destruction they could see Japanese soldiers nearby preparing an assault bridge of their own. No shots were exchanged. Both parties worked hard on their own tasks. At 9.00 a.m. the sappers blew the bridge, falling back towards Major Grey's first position at Fanling, and as the dust settled the Japanese started to erect their replacement structure.

Major Grey's next demolition was at Pine-apple Pass just north of Tai Po. A successful piece of engineering blew down the cutting sides and blocked the railway and road for some way. As engineers destroyed petrol pumps and abandoned cars in the village the leading Japanese closed up to the demolition, swung westwards and ran into an ambush. Casualties were inflicted by the Punjabis, who then broke off the action as Japanese forward elements began to encircle them, and pulled back to the next position.

Kai Tak aerodrome is now Hong Kong's international airport.

A similar neat action was fought that night just to the south of Tai Po when the advancing Japanese walked straight into an ambush at short range. Once more the Punjabis had to withdraw as parties of Japanese landed by boat behind them. By evening of the following day Major Grey's force was back in the Gin Drinkers Line. They had fought a skilful action, causing over a hundred casualties, destroying sixteen major demolitions and delaying the enemy for two days.

Meanwhile, Colonel Shoji and 230 Regiment had pushed in the Volunteers' forward patrols on the Castle Peak road and had then swung off onto the slopes of Tai Mo Shan, establishing an artillery position on the elevated flat ground at Sek Kong.

During these two days, incessant bombing raids had been carried out over Hong Kong, causing considerable damage and many casualties and by the night of December 9 the Japanese ground forces had closed up to the Gin Drinkers Line. Thus the preliminaries were complete and the main action was about to begin.

THE SHINGMUN REDOUBT

The Shingmun Redoubt had been planned as the key position in the Gin Drinkers Line. Tons of concrete had been poured into a complex of pillboxes and observation posts. Yet there were many weaknesses in the position. Some embrasures in the pillboxes were so constructed that it was impossible to depress the machine guns sufficiently to cover the steep slopes below them. Scrub-filled ravines offered covered approaches to the attacker. The rugged, jagged terrain made mutual support difficult between positions. The Redoubt was overlooked by high ground to the front. Worst of all, in a position which needed at least a company to hold it successfully the Royal Scots could only spare A Company Headquarters, No. 8 Platoon and an artillery observation party, and the platoon itself had patrol tasks to perform. The Royal Scots were, in fact, extremely stretched, being required to cover a front of three miles over broken, difficult ground. The other battalions were equally spread out, for the Mainland





Brigade was tasked to hold a position intended for a full division and there was a large gap between the Royal Scots' right and the Punjabis' left into which General Maltby placed D Company of the Rajputs on the morning of the 9th, although this was insufficient to close the gap between the two battalions.

By the afternoon Colonel Doi was on Needle Hill carrying out a reconnaissance of the Redoubt. He noticed little British activity and, despite the fact that it was the designated objective of Colonel Shoji on his right, he decided to attack the position that night. He told his 2nd Battalion to carry out reconnaissance and to secure a start line and ordered the 3rd Battalion to assault the position at 11.00 p.m.

As the Japanese moved up to their start positions a patrol of No. 8 Platoon which had been sent to make contact with Captain H. R. Newton's Punjabi company returned along Smuggler's Ridge. The patrol passed, without being aware of it, Japanese soldiers who had already gained the crest of the narrow ridge-line and reported in to Sergeant Robb. The men stayed with their platoon sergeant as their officer, 2nd Lieutenant J. S. R. Thompson, climbed the hill to report to Captain C. R. Jones in the OP which he shared with the artillery observation officer, Lieutenant L. C. Wilcox. As Thompson finished his report, the Japanese advance was spotted by a sentry near the Shingmun River, who opened fire on them. The two leading Japanese companies immediately assaulted the eastern half of the position around pill-boxes 401 and 402. All exits to the tunnels were sealed off by the Japanese. Others hurled grenades down the ventilation shafts and finally small parties entered the tunnels to engage in hand-to-hand fighting. As this was happening a Royal Scots machine gun on the western half of the position opened up, catching the Battalion Headquarters of 3rd Battalion, 228 Regiment, in the open and causing casualties. The reserve companies of 3rd Battalion then passed through and started the attack on the western position.

Kowloon under fire. This picture has been taken looking north into the New Territories with the Island in the foreground. A Zero rises to the attack because now the Japanese are receiving some of their own medicine — this time from American B-24s. This picture from US archives makes a fair comparison with that taken by the Survey Division Lands Development of the Hong Kong Government in May 1983. Colonels Shoji and Doi landed on the Island on the right.

The command bunker was quickly surrounded. Grenades were lobbed through the embrasures. The steel door was blown in killing two Indian signallers. Lieutenant Wilcox called down artillery fire from the 9.2-inch guns at Fort Davis onto the Redoubt in an effort to sweep away the attackers. Finally 2nd Lieutenant Thompson — the only man not wounded in the bunker — was left firing through a large hole in the wall. A grenade then blew him to the floor and another landed beside his head. As he was about to sweep it away he realized that this would cause it to roll into a group of wounded men so he put his steel helmet over his face instead. Thompson lived but the explosion blinded him fully in one eye and partially in the other.

At half-past three eighteen survivors from the Redoubt reached Captain Newton's Company position. Pillbox 402 was isolated and held out for eleven hours until it was caved in by a direct hit from a British artillery shell.

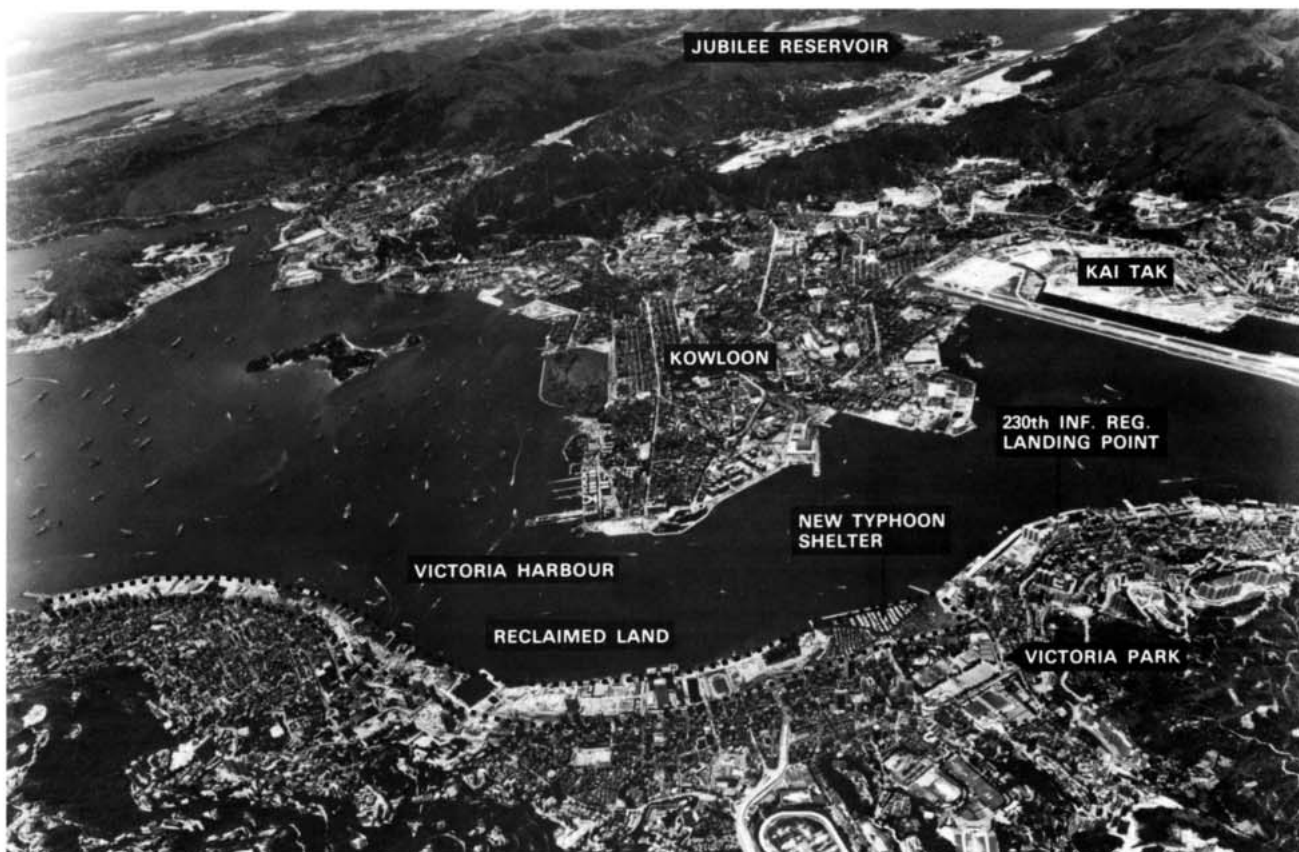
The capture of the Shingmun Redoubt was a major military and psychological blow for the British but the Japanese nearly threw away their advantage. Major-General Sano, angry that Colonel Doi should have disobeyed his orders and attacked Colonel Shoji's objective, ordered 228 Regiment to abandon the position. Doi refused twice and was finally allowed to stay put.

Meanwhile, although a company of Winnipeg Grenadiers was moved to the mainland as reinforcements, no attempt was made next day to recapture the Redoubt by a counter-attack. The GOC had ordered the Redoubt be retaken but Brigadier Wallis said the men were in no condition to do so. Instead the Royal Scots were ordered to pull back the next night to a shorter line from the sea at Li Chi Kok to a hill just south of the Redoubt. This was known as the Golden Hill feature.

THE FIGHT FOR GOLDEN HILL

As darkness fell on December 10 the Royal Scots withdrew unmolested to new positions on Golden Hill and established themselves there during the night. The planners' maps in Fortress Headquarters showed the Golden Hill line as a strong feature, but the Royal Scots found it less encouraging. Tired and low in spirits they struggled up the steep side of the ridge in the darkness and found no prepared positions on the crestline, only a few old trenches and some rusty barbed wire. They dug shell scrapes where they could, had a tot of rum per man instead of breakfast, and stood to at dawn to await the Japanese attack. They did not have long to wait.

At 7.30 a.m. Colonel Shoji's 230 Regiment attacked, anxious to gain the laurels which had been snatched from them when 228 Regiment had taken the Shingmun Redoubt before they arrived. Within the Royal Scots' position D Company commanded by Captain D. Pinkerton were on the crest of Golden Hill. To their left, lower down the ridge towards the sea, were B and C Companies, and Battalion Headquarters and two platoons of A Company who had survived the attack on the redoubt. Heavy mortaring preceded the Japanese attack, which fell first on D Company. They cleared the crest of Golden Hill with the bayonet. Then the main weight of the assault fell on C Company. The Company Commander, Captain W. R. T. Rose, was killed, British artillery fire, dropping short, fell amongst the company and they were gradually pushed back on to B Company. B Company Commander, Captain P. S. Richardson, was killed and both companies were gradually forced back down the hill towards A Company where the line was re-established. D Company, meanwhile, had been driven off the top



of the hill after a hard fight. In three hours the Royal Scots had lost a sixth of their strength, with casualties highest amongst the officers.

The other two mainland battalions had only been lightly engaged during the fighting on December 10 and 11 but the Royal Scots had been badly mauled and the Gin Drinkers Line had crumbled on the left. At noon on December 11 General Maltby decided to evacuate the mainland that night.

The Royal Scots made their way to the Star Ferry on Kowloon Point and by 10.30 p.m. were all on the Island. D Company, the Winnipeg Grenadiers followed them across and most of their transport was evacuated successfully. For the two Indian battalions the plan called for 2/14th Punjabis to withdraw to the Devil's Peak Peninsula, passing Ma Lau Tong, the prepared defence line held by the 5th/7th Rajputs before crossing the Lye Mun Channel. It was a tough proposition for the Punjabis, involving a move across country by night of some twelve thousand yards, carrying all their equipment and weapons. The country was tough and the Japanese were on their heels, but the Punjabis did it without losing a man. When dawn came on December 12 half the Punjabis were across to the Island and the remainder were resting behind the Rajputs' line.

The Rajputs were bombed the next morning without receiving casualties and just before dark a battalion attack from 229 Regiment, unsupported by artillery or mortar fire, was thrown back with heavy casualties to the Japanese.

After darkness fell the balance of the Punjabis and the field artillery were ferried to the Island. At 4.30 a.m. on December 13 General Maltby ordered the Rajputs to evacuate their position and by 8.30 a.m. all British troops had evacuated the mainland. The Japanese made no attempt to interfere with the crossing which was completed safely.

As the last troops left Devil's Peak Peninsula, Lieutenant-General Sakai despatched a party of officers to the Island under a white flag demanding that the Governor, Sir Mark Young, should surrender.

This was in accordance with the Japanese strategy for the capture of the colony. When Sir Mark summarily rejected the proposal, General Sakai was faced with the prospect of the invasion of Hong Kong Island itself.

THE LANDINGS

The British used the time after the evacuation of the New Territories to make their preparations. By General Maltby's reckoning the fighting on the mainland had been reasonably satisfactory: the Japanese had been held for long enough for the port installations to be destroyed and had been withdrawn without significant loss. He was now faced with the classic dilemma of the defender facing an invasion: that of whether to disperse his troops evenly along the threatened area or whether to hold forward lightly for observation and concentrate his main force centrally ready to move forward to any threatened area in strength. The same choice confronted the Germans in Normandy in 1944. They went for the second option, to hold back in concentrated force. Maltby, faced with a long coastline, menaced all round by the Japanese Navy, and by poor internal road communications dominated by enemy air superiority, chose the first option, to cover the whole area. Accordingly he left the Middlesex in their pillboxes around the Island, and stationed his conventional infantry battalions in various sectors of the Island; the Punjabis in the north-west, the Rajputs in the north-east, the Royal Scots in Happy Valley in the centre of the northern shore, the Royal Rifles in the south-east and the Winnipeg Grenadiers in the south-west, from where they were to provide a reserve company when required. Seven rifle companies of Volunteers were distributed throughout the Island, along with their five artillery batteries. Brigadier J. K. Lawson, the former Director of Military Training, Ottawa, was given command of West Brigade (Punjabis, Royal Scots and Winnipeg Grenadiers) and established his headquarters in the Wong Nei Chong Gap. Brigadier Wallis took East Brigade (Rajputs and Royal Rifles) and set up

command at the Tai Tam Gap. These 'Gaps' are interesting features. Hong Kong Island has a tangled wall of hills along the east-west spine and, other than the coastal road, communications from north to south follow the roads through saddles in the hills, known locally as 'Gaps'. The Wong Nei Chong Gap, where Brigadier Lawson established his headquarters was, and still is, the focal point of road communications on the Island, with roads running from it to Victoria, Repulse Bay and Aberdeen. Whoever controlled the Wong Nei Chong Gap and the hills around it — Mount Nicholson, Jardine's Lookout and Violet Hill — controlled the vital ground on the Island.

While the British reorganised themselves the Japanese made their plans for an assault landing. While the reconnaissance and staff planning went ahead, their aircraft carried out daily, indiscriminate bombing of the heavily populated areas along the north shore of the Island, bringing chaos and destruction to civilians as well as soldiers. Their artillery, well briefed, set about a systematic programme of destroying the British pillboxes, fixed defences and air raid shelters, and many hard words were said about the inferior quality of the cement which had been used in their construction. Fifth columnists stepped up activities, spreading dissatisfaction and dissent, food queues formed at Government rice distribution centres and the once-gay peacetime colony found the grim realities of war pressing hard upon it.

After a week of bombardment the Japanese had a second try at winning their prize without a fight. On December 17 envoys crossed the harbour by launch with a message to the effect that further resistance being futile, surrender was the only choice for the garrison. They were sent back with a message from Sir Mark Young which was a masterpiece of British curt formality: 'The Governor and Commander-in-Chief of Hong Kong declines absolutely to enter into negotiations for the surrender of Hong Kong, and takes this opportunity of notifying Lieutenant-General Sakai and Vice-Admiral Masaichi Nimi that he is not pre-



The Japanese first attempted a crossing of the Lye Mun Strait on the night of December 15 but this was easily beaten off. Three days later came the successful landings in force. Now the battle is over and Colonel Tanaka looks out across to Devil's Peak from where his 229th Infantry Regiment embarked on December 18.



This is the same landing area — Aldrich Bay — now flanked by multi-storey development. The colonel was surveying the scene from the high ground on the left.

pared to receive any further communication from them on the subject'. It was splendid stuff and in keeping with messages Sir Mark was receiving from Churchill urging resistance to the end. It was in keeping, too, with the general feeling of the garrison, where morale was still high despite the bombardment.

There was no alternative now for either side. For the Japanese assault was unavoidable; for the British resistance to the end was inevitable. That same afternoon Lieutenant-General Sakai confirmed the plan for the invasion and Major-General Sano gave out his orders at his headquarters in Kowloon. The main weight of the assault was to fall on the north-east corner of the Island and the plan for the attack was simple and uncomplicated. Each was to leave one battalion in Kowloon for garrison duties, the remaining six were to assault in two waves. On the right, looked at from the Japanese viewpoint, Colonel Shoji's 230 was to embark west of Kai Tak and land at North Point; in the centre Colonel Doi's 228

Regiment was to embark east of Kai Tak and land at Braemar, and on the left Colonel Tanaka's 229 Regiment was to embark at Devil's Peak and land at Shau Ki Wan. Once ashore all three regiments had orders to bypass opposition and head inland to seize the high ground in the centre of the Island (Mount Nicholson, Wong Nei Chong Gap, Jardine's Lookout, Mount Butler and Mount Parker) prior to fanning out the following night west and south-west. The Japanese had two advantages in this plan. Firstly, General Maltby anticipated the landings would come in the north-west of the Island, directed at the main urban centre and, secondly, their soldiers were well trained and indoctrinated to be careless of death. As the Japanese prepared for their hazardous water crossing by night, an order was given which was to have consequences that were forever to taint the campaign with horror and with dishonour for the Japanese: Colonel Tanaka told his regiment that they were to take no prisoners.

THE WONG NEI CHONG GAP

As darkness fell on December 18 the leading Japanese boats of the first wave pushed off across Victoria Harbour. They were half-way to their objective before being discovered as they were shielded by the superstructure of sunken ships and by clouds of black smoke pouring from the burning oil tanks and paintworks on the North Point waterfront. Pressing ahead through the defenders' fire they effected their landings and moved inland. Command and control was extremely difficult for the attackers and companies and battalions became badly mixed up as they advanced. All groups however obeyed their orders to head for the high ground and by dawn on the 19th the Japanese were in possession of most of Jardine's Lookout, Mount Butler and the northern slopes of Mount Parker. Although it was not clear at the time to either defenders or attackers, the Japanese had within the first hours of the fighting on the Island established themselves securely on the dominating ground from which they could effectively drive a wedge between the two British brigades. It is clear in retrospect that they had already made the move which was to ensure their eventual victory.

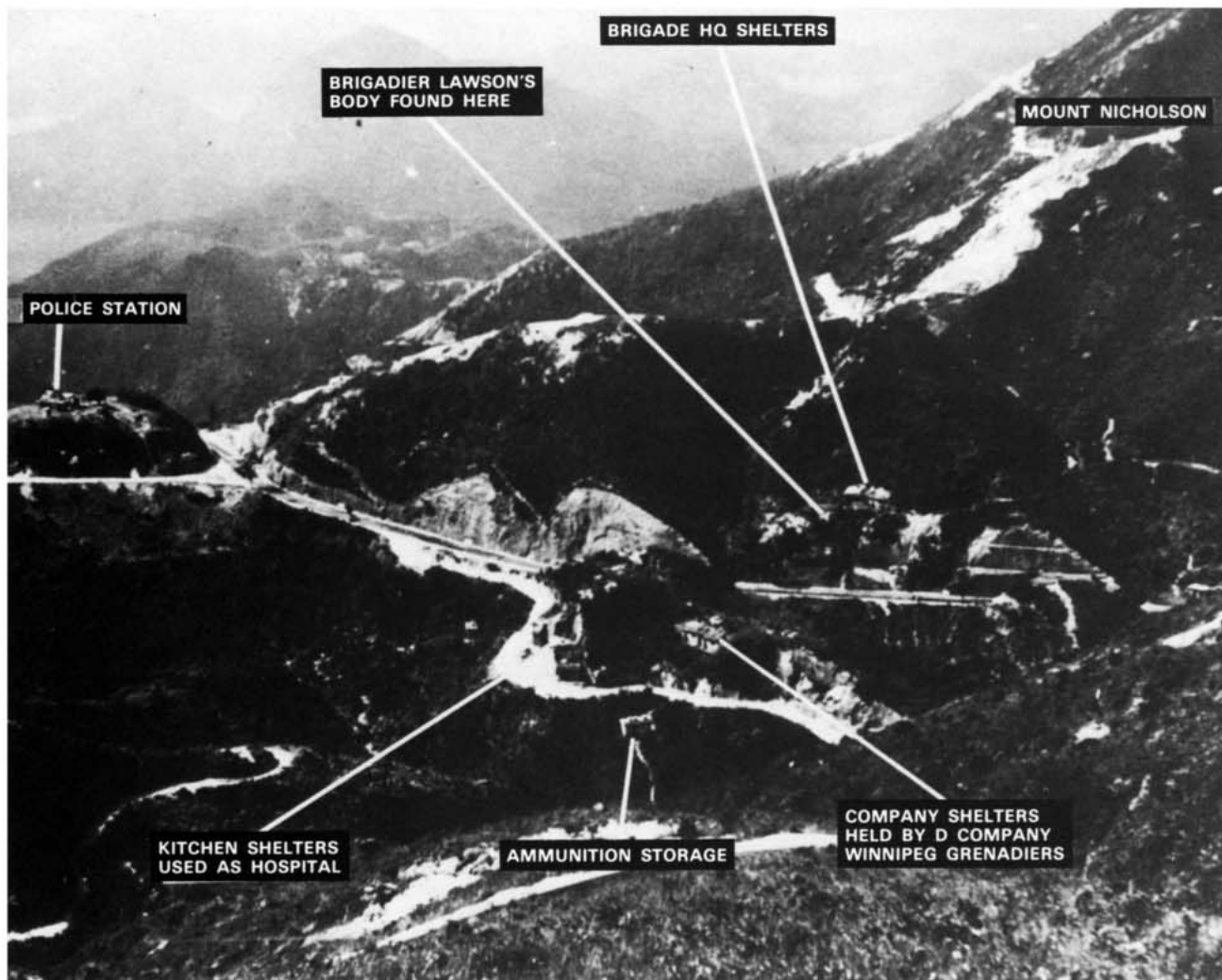
The capture of the high features had been the result of a hard night's fighting for both sides. During the course of it 5/7 Rajputs had ceased to be effective as a battalion. Individual pillboxes had fought bravely until overrun and two company counter-attacks had been attempted and had failed. Battalion Headquarters had lost their position and regained it, only to be forced off it again. The Japanese chivvied them up the slopes of Mount Butler and eventually the Commanding Officer, Lieutenant-Colonel R. C. Rawlinson, slipped the enemy lines and reached East Brigade Headquarters at the Tai Tam Gap. A few survivors, based on B Company which were all that remained of the battalion, came under command of Headquarters 1 Middlesex at Leighton Hill.

Other groups, too, fought well during the night. Guarding the Hong Kong Electric Company plant at North Point was a group of elderly gentlemen called the 'Hughesiliers' after their first commander Major Hughes. Composed of prominent businessmen over the age of fifty-five who were too old to join the Volunteers, they were determined to do their bit for the defence of the colony. Reinforced by a platoon of Volunteers, they were cut off by Colonel Shoji's battalions and fought a stubborn action until the handful of survivors ran out of ammunition and were forced to surrender at 4.00 p.m. the following afternoon.

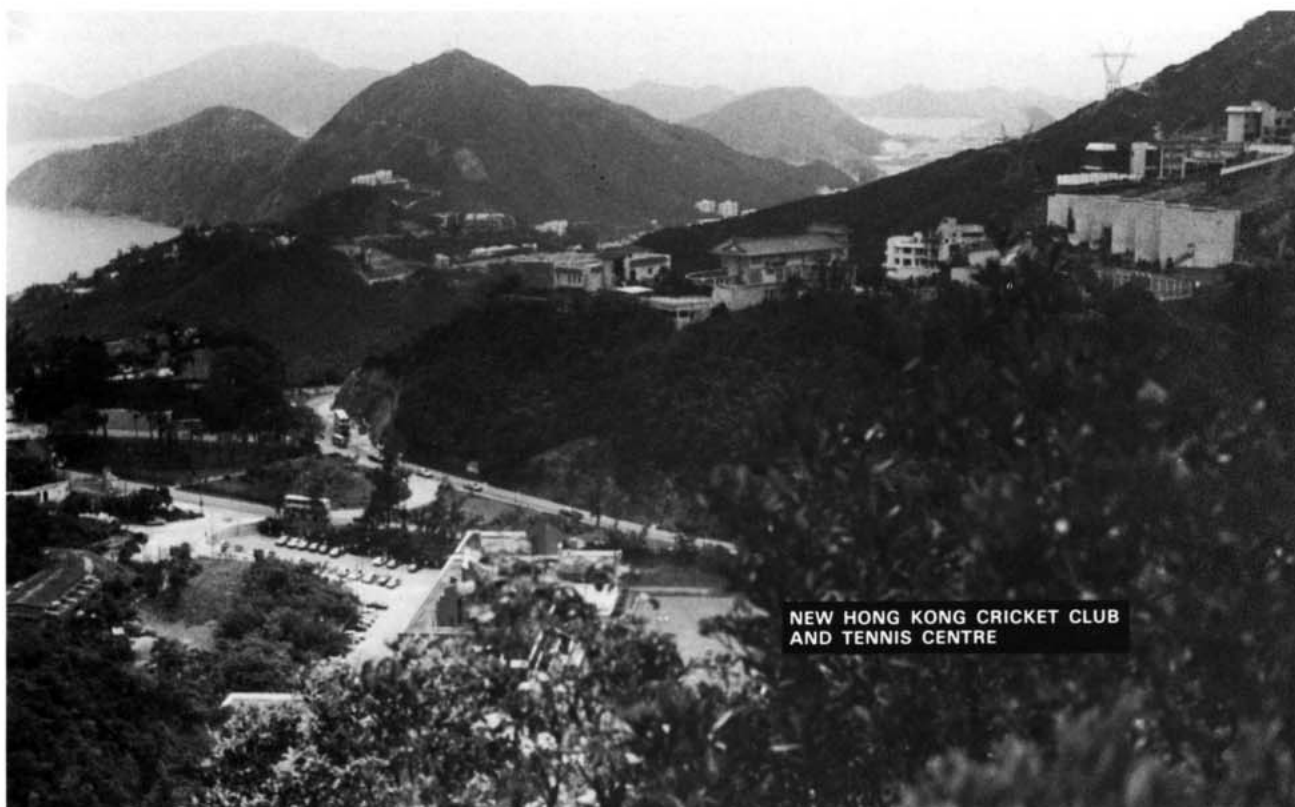
The Volunteers were also in action on Jardine's Lookout where they manned a number of pillboxes and defensive positions with two platoons. After hand-to-hand fighting they were still holding on at dawn.

Further east Colonel Tanaka's Regiment had been successful in capturing Mount Butler. On the way, however, they had committed the first of the atrocities which were to be a feature of the coming week. Overrunning a Volunteer anti-aircraft battery at Sai Wan Hill they took twenty prisoners, roped them together and bayoneted them in cold blood. Miraculously two survived and with other witnesses were to give evidence after the war to a War Crimes Court which sentenced Colonel Tanaka to twenty years' imprisonment. At an RAMC dressing station in Shau Ki Wan in the Silesian Mission, the staff offered no resistance and were led up a hillside where the Japanese soldiers shot and bayoneted to death eight Canadians, four RAMC soldiers and three St John's Ambulance men. Again four of the staff, despite ferocious wounds, were lucky enough to survive to tell the tale.

By dawn on December 19 it was clear to Brigadier Lawson in the West Brigade Headquarters' bunkers at the Wong Nei Chong



Wong Nei Chong Gap — the key to the defence of the Island — then and now. (National Archives of Canada)





Brigadier John Kelburne Lawson left his native land to command his fellow Canadians in their gallant yet futile attempt to save Hong Kong. Colonel Shoji wrote later: 'When the heroic defences at Wong Nei Chong were captured, during the departure of the prisoners, I received reports of the discovery of the body of Brigadier Lawson. He had died of a wound to his



right leg and loss of blood. The medical officer, Captain Kimura, wrapped the body in the blanket of Lieutenant Okada, the current company commander, and I ordered the temporary burial of the officer on the battleground on which he had died so heroically.' Today the brigadier lies with others of the Royal Canadian Regiment in Sai Wan Bay Cemetery.

Gap that the situation was desperate. At 2.00 a.m. he had sent a reserve company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers with orders to reinforce Jardine's Lookout. They were unable to climb the steep, tangled slopes in the dark and attempted it at first light only to find the Japanese on the summit. After a short, unsuccessful action the survivors joined up with the Volunteers further down the slope. Brigadier Lawson then ordered his only other reserve, A Company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers, to move across and recapture Mount Butler. The attack was successful but only for a short time. At 10.00 a.m. the Japanese launched an assault by three companies which wiped out the Canadian company. In the course of this battle CSM J. R. Osborn won the Victoria Cross for his great courage and leadership and for his final act of self-sacrifice when he threw himself onto a grenade, saving the lives of several men in his group.

As the Japanese tightened their grip on the hills around the Wong Nei Chong Gap, Brigadier Lawson realised his Headquarters was in the centre of the threatened area and made arrangements to move to an alternative site on the southern slopes of Mount Nicholson. At 10.00 a.m. on the morning of the 19th he led his staff out of the bunkers and moved off down a path, only to be cut down by a burst of Japanese machine gun fire at close range.

After Brigadier Lawson's death a most confused period of fighting began. Headquarters West Brigade had ceased to exist and, as signal and telephone communications throughout the Island were in chaos, a new commander for the brigade was not appointed for thirty-six hours. During this time a series of piecemeal counter-attacks and isolated actions took place in and around the Gap. A company of Royal Scots attacked up the road from Wanchai in trucks and were virtually annihilated, although a further two companies actually re-captured the Gap for a time. Engineers, Indian gunners and sailors all attempted to reach the Gap in turn and failed; the Volunteers were forced to surrender on Jardine's Lookout and D Company and the Winnipeg Grenadiers were evicted from the area of the old West Brigade Headquarters after holding out until December 22. Colonel Shoji admitted to 800 casualties in securing the Wong Nei Chong Gap.

REPULSE BAY

While Brigadier Lawson's Brigade were putting up a gallant, if uncoordinated fight around the Wong Nei Chong Gap, the fortunes of East Brigade had not been far short of disastrous. During the night of the landings General Maltby discussed by telephone with Brigadier Wallis the possibility of his brigade closing in towards the Wong Nei Chong Gap to reinforce the troops there and to simplify command and control. By daybreak, however, it was clear to the Brigadier that this was impossible. The Japanese had already driven a wedge between him and West Brigade, the Rajputs had ceased to exist as a battalion and his only other battalion, the Royal Rifles of Canada, were falling back from Lyemun to around his position in the Tai Tam Gap. He had already ordered them in one counter-attack which had failed. The tired soldiers, dispirited after days of bombardment, had neither the strength nor the training to undertake difficult cross-country operations. Accordingly he proposed to the GOC that East Brigade consolidate in positions around the Stanley Peninsula to secure a firm base from which to mount operations. General Maltby agreed and withdrawal was carried out by nightfall on December 19. About fifty Rajputs under their Battalion Headquarters, two companies of the Middlesex, the Royal Rifles of Canada and No. 1 Company of the Volunteers now made up East Brigade. Unfortunately, during the withdrawal one mobile artillery battery had stayed in action too long and been captured, and a second had been destroyed on the mistaken orders of its commander. This lack of field artillery was to cripple any serious attempt at offensive action by East Brigade from then on. Additionally the withdrawal to Stanley allowed the Japanese to infiltrate towards the Deep Water Bay area, capturing Brick Hill and Violet Hill. Co-operation between the two brigades was rendered well-nigh impossible from then on.

Nevertheless Brigadier Wallis did what he could to take the pressure off West Brigade. The Royal Rifles were ordered to attack towards the Wong Nei Chong Gap along the Repulse Bay Road on December 20. They were slow to move off and had only just passed beyond the famous Repulse Bay Hotel before the attack petered out and they were forced to withdraw leaving A Company in the area of the hotel. A platoon of Middlesex under 2nd

Lieutenant Peter Grounds, which had the task of guarding the hotel, had brushed with the Japanese early that morning when a party of the enemy were seen from the hotel beating up a captured soldier outside the hotel garage across the road. Grounds put the civilians sheltering in the hotel onto the ground floor and organised an attack on the garage. He successfully drove the Japanese out and released five prisoners but he himself was killed in the action.

At dawn the following day, December 21, Brigadier Wallis, having been rebuffed on his left flank through Repulse Bay, ordered a right flanking attack in an attempt to reach Wong Nei Chong Gap across country via the Tai Tam Reservoir. Again the attack was slow to start and after capturing Notting Hill it was halted by two battalions of Colonel Doi's regiment dug in on higher ground. The Brigadier decided to withdraw the Royal Rifles and to send them into Stanley Fort to rest and reorganise. It was the last attempt made to link up with West Brigade in the Wong Nei Chong Gap or with the troops in the Repulse Bay Hotel.

That night Major C. R. Templar of the Royal Artillery was sent from Stanley to take command at the hotel. Once there he led A Company of the Royal Rifles of Canada forward again to the Wong Nei Chong Gap but it was a hopeless attempt. The Gap was securely held and the attack had to be abandoned. Leaving A Company in a large house short of the Gap, Major Templar returned to the hotel. The hotel was held against Japanese patrols during the night and the next two days, the enemy being evicted on one occasion by Major Templar bowling hand-grenades down the sumptuously-carpeted corridors. On December 23 General Maltby decided that the troops should withdraw leaving the civilians, and this was effected after the moon had set. Back in the hotel the civilians nervously awaited the Japanese. When they finally arrived a tense situation developed as some soldiers with fixed bayonets started to edge towards the beds of the wounded. An elderly nurse, Miss Mosey, barred their way.

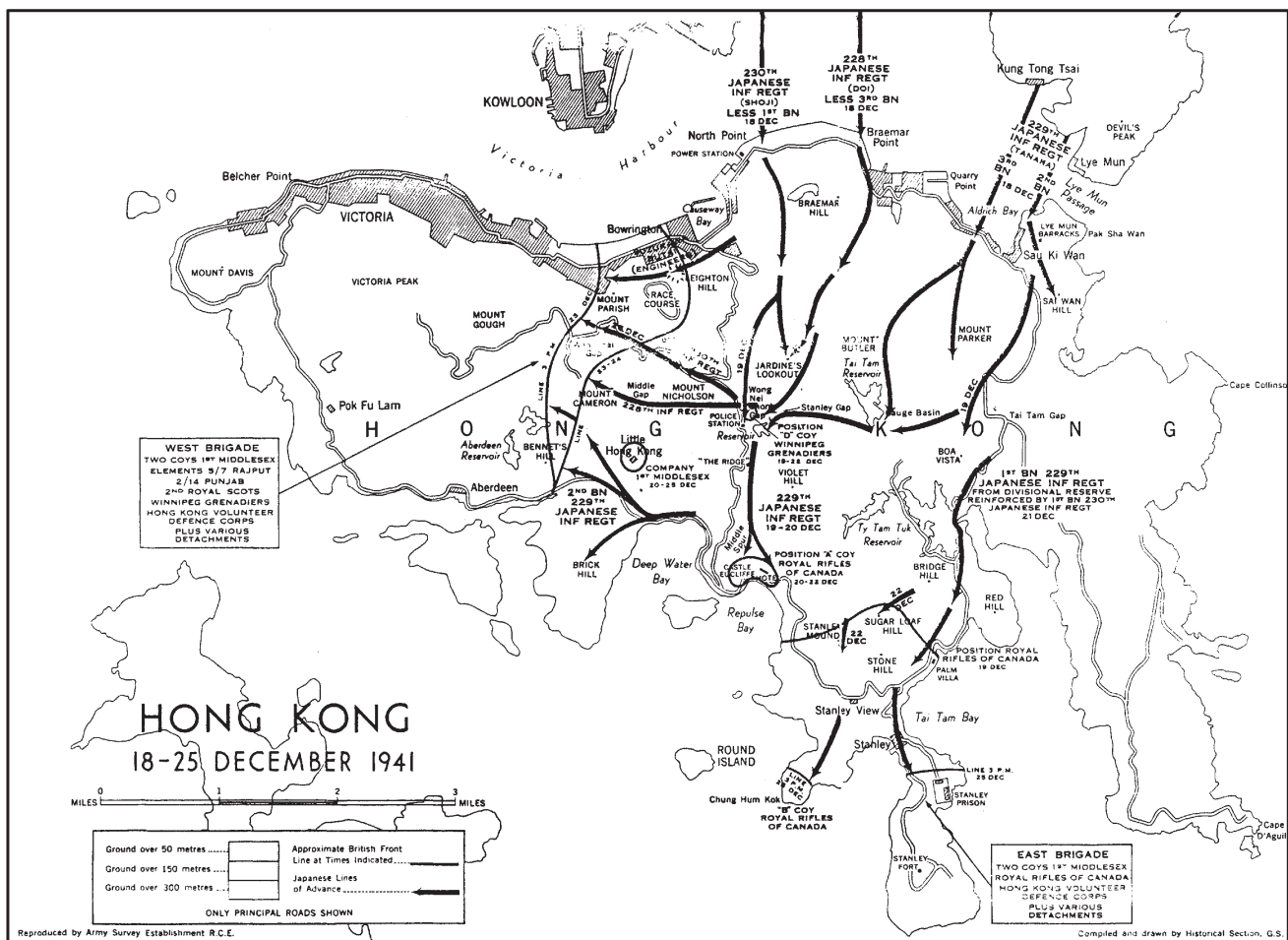
'You will have to kill me first before you kill them', she said, and although they may not have understood her words there was no mistaking her intentions. The soldiers hesitated and turned away and no harm was done to the civilians in the hotel then or later.



Above: Repulse Bay with its historic hotel behind the beach on the left, photographed by Bob Yates in 1939. The defence of the large rambling building by Lieutenant Peter Ground's C Company of the Middlesex together with some naval ratings and a small party of Hong Kong Royal Navy Volunteer Reservists, is firmly established in the lore of the battle. Holding out against infiltrators in the grounds, on December 23 a Japanese patrol got inside the north wing only to be repulsed by Major Templer with hand grenades. Later it served as a hospital.

Below: After the war the Peninsula Group advertised it as 'a romantic link with the past . . . a landmark well loved by residents for the part it has played in Hong Kong's history'. Empty words for it was unceremoniously demolished in 1982 so that the site could be redeveloped with 50-storey apartment buildings. However the sudden collapse of the property market coupled with the over-supply of luxury flats has resulted in the site remaining empty — a sad ending to such an historic building.



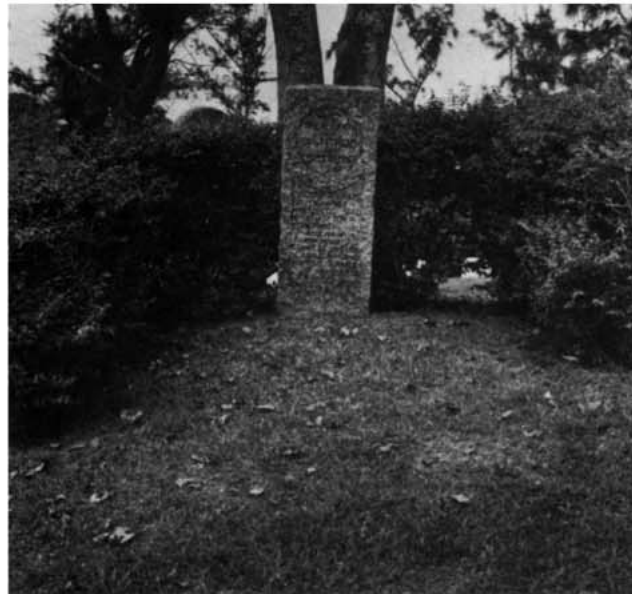


THE FINAL PHASE

With East Brigade isolated in Stanley, Japanese attention was mainly directed at West Brigade and General Sano ordered an advance westwards to end British resistance and finish the fighting. Colonel Doi's Regiment captured Mount Nicholson from the Royal Scots on December 21, the same day that the Commanding Officer of the Punjabis, Lieutenant Colonel G. R. Kidd, was killed leading an attempt to break through to



Colonel Tanaka's 229th Regiment left its bloody mark on the campaign, and an indelible stain on the reputation of the Japanese fighting man, with a trail of massacres during their advance across the Island. Here at Eucliffe Mansion, built by Eu Tong-sen in the 1930s, the 3rd Battalion executed fifty-three British and Canadian prisoners. (The long, low building behind is the Repulse Bay Hotel.)



Repulse Bay. The night of December 21/22 saw a general lull in the fighting. The Japanese prepared themselves for the final effort and the British derived some comfort from the news, incorrect as it turned out, that Chinese forces were reported moving to their aid from the north.

On the 22nd the Japanese increased their pressure on West Brigade, now commanded by Colonel H. B. Rose of the Volunteers, located at the Wanchai Gap. That night two battalions of Colonel Doi's regiment pushed the defenders off Mount Cameron — a hundred Winnipeg Grenadiers and thirty Royal Engineers — to capture the last piece of dominating high ground held by the British.

The following morning one of Colonel Shoji's battalions forced the last dozen exhausted survivors of D Company of the Winnipeg Grenadiers to surrender, thus finally securing the Wong Nei Chong Gap, and on the same day his troops forced the last Rajputs and Middlesex defenders off Leighton Hill and back into the city.

Christmas Eve was an equally depressing day for the defenders. Every man that could walk and hold a rifle had been pressed into service in the rapidly constricting perimeters of West Brigade. The colours of the Middlesex Regiment were buried secretly in the garden of Flagstaff House by the ADC to General Maltby (those of the Royal Scots had been sent to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in Singapore in 1940). At Stanley, fierce fighting took place as the Japanese edged their way down the Peninsula. Particularly heavy firing went on around the police station which held

Meanwhile the 2nd Battalion were slaughtering wounded Canadians at Brick Hill and bayonetting bedridden patients in St Stephen's College which, like the Convents, University and some schools, had been turned into a temporary hospital. Those who died were buried here in a corner of Stanley Cemetery. Today the grave is still marked with the original stone carved in granite and erected by internees from Stanley Jail which lies close by the cemetery. (IWM)

out till nearly midnight. As Christmas Eve drew to a close Major-General Sano gave orders that the British were to be finally overcome on the following day. Colonel Doi and Shoji were to crush resistance in and around Victoria while the three battalions of Colonel Tanaka's regiment were to mop up at Stanley, Brick Hill and Repulse Bay respectively.

Tanaka's 1st Battalion were already heavily engaged at Stanley and he set off with the 2nd to Brick Hill. His 3rd Battalion, under Major Kenmotsu, set up its headquarters at a large house called Eucliff, a Chinese millionaire's castle on the shore of Repulse Bay. As the British and Canadian prisoners were brought in they were roped together and sat on the edge of the cliff to be shot or bayoneted. Fifty-three bodies were later found at the foot of the cliff.

As the Japanese in the north worked their way towards Fortress HQ it became increasingly apparent that the long delayed surrender was inevitable. At 3.15 p.m. on Christmas Day General Maltby advised the Governor that further resistance was useless and the order to surrender was transmitted to all troops. Gradually and wearily the two sides disengaged. Colonel Tanaka's regiment's final footnote of horror to the campaign was the slaughtering of the wounded of a platoon



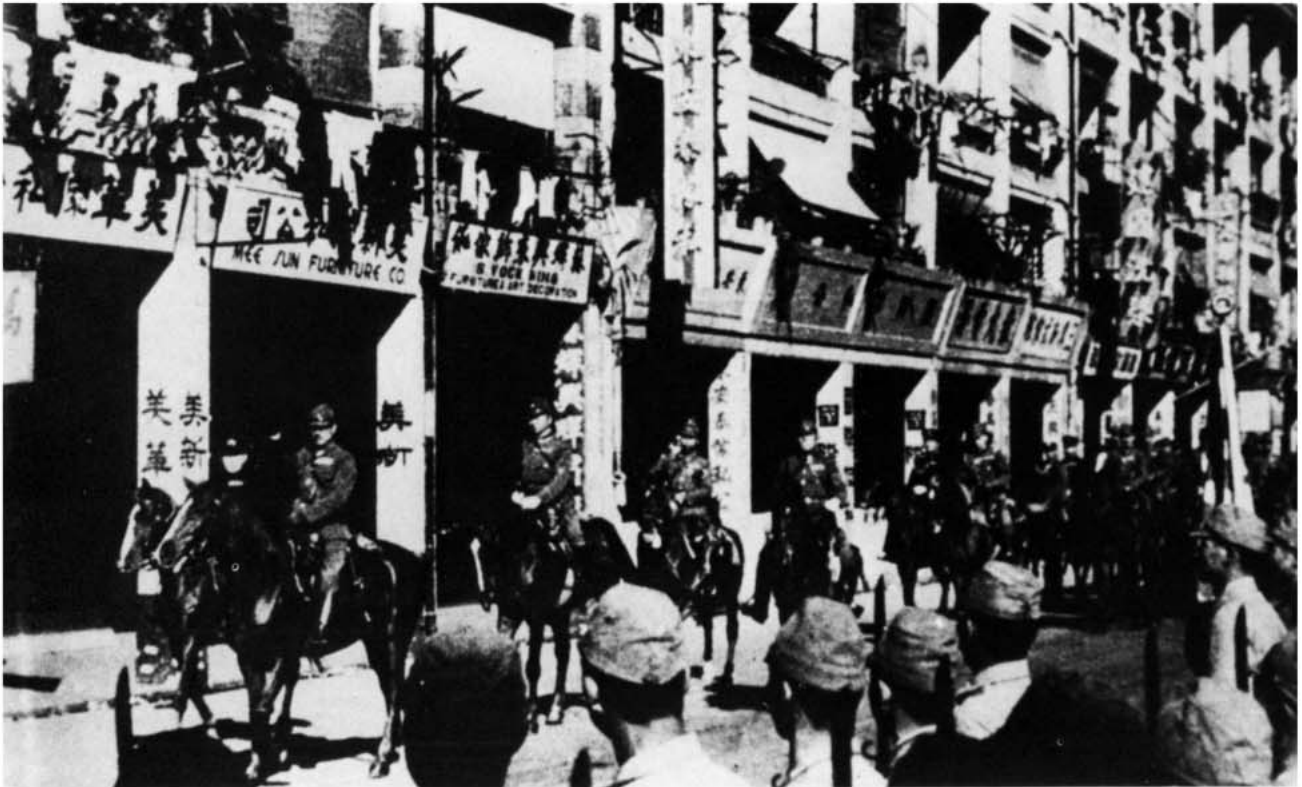
of surrendered Canadians near Brick Hill and a bestial attack on the wounded and nursing staff in St Stephen's College, Stanley, where the wounded were killed in their beds, two doctors shot and seven nurses, four of them Chinese, raped and murdered.



St Stephen's lies just out of this picture to the right but the paddy fields of 1945 are now the playing fields of the college.



Stanley village can be seen in the distance. Dense tropical vegetation prevented an exact comparison. (IWM)



Lieutenant-General Takaishi Sakai triumphally leads his forces down Des Voeux Road, one of the three main roads in the Central District. Incredibly one of the few four-storey buildings on the original photograph still stands.

A few hundred yards beyond St Stephen's College the war was still not over. Although the commanding officer of the Royal Rifles had for some days been trying to persuade his Brigadier that the cause was lost, Brigadier Wallis held his force together till the end . . . and beyond. As the last line of Volunteers, Middlesex and Gunners held fast in the rocky hillside above Stanley Prison, just outside the Fort, a car carrying a British staff officer and flying a white flag came through the line bearing the order to surrender. Brigadier Wallis refused to believe that the officer was serious and sent his Brigade Major back for written confirmation from Fortress HQ. Meanwhile the Japanese resumed shelling the Fort and the defenders returned the fire with small arms until the officer returned with confirmation of the cease-fire.

Boxing Day was exactly forty-five minutes old when Brigadier Wallis, now wounded himself, signed the order which finally stopped the fighting and made his way down the hill to surrender himself to the Japanese Battalion Commander in Stanley. It was just one hundred years since Captain Elliot, RN, had first hoisted the British Flag at Possession Point on the barren rock which was to become the Crown Colony of Hong Kong.



Christmas Day in the Peninsula Hotel (left), the Japanese HQ in Kowloon. Right: Sir Mark Young, the Governor (centre) and



General Maltby (right) at the candlelit surrender ceremony with Lieutenant-General Sakai.



"The past is not cherished or preserved in Hong Kong today; the city is always on the move, buildings are torn down and replaced according to the pulse of the property market. As for purposely preserving relics of the war — the heavily constructed bunkers on the hill-sides, the pillboxes at the shoreline or even the monuments and odd buildings constructed by the Japanese during their three-year-eight-month occupation — it would be foolish to expect to find any of these in pragmatic Hong Kong." So wrote Dr Alan Birch of the Department of History at Hong Kong University in July 1982 when we asked him to comment on what remains today of the Hong Kong of 1941.

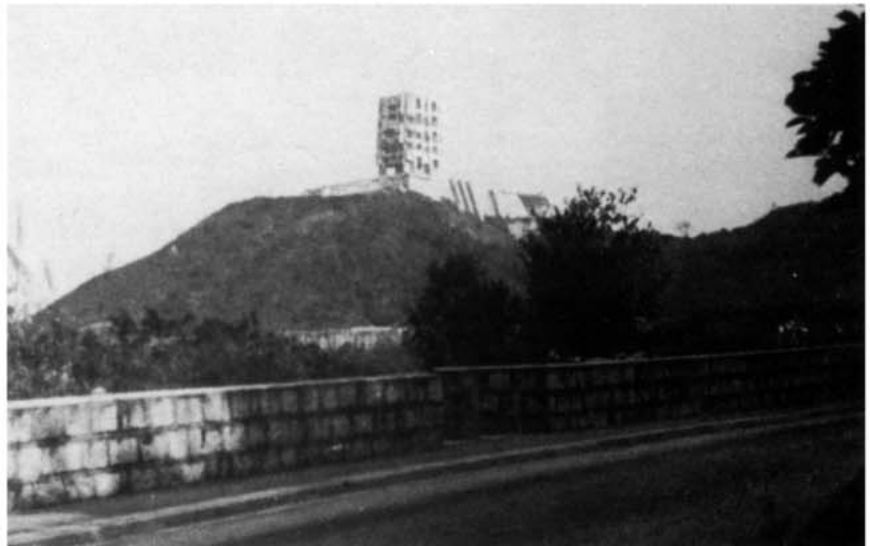
We first opened our file on the battle in 1978 and now, six years later, after several setbacks and not a little negative advice from those who told us that no comparison photography would be possible in view of the vast development which has taken place over the past forty years, Graham Campbell, senior project architect for the Hong Kong Polytechnic, has managed to trace many of the locations depicted in the wartime photographs. Although the tremendous rebuilding makes quite a number of the comparisons meaningless, it nevertheless provides a dramatic contrast for one of the Second World War's significant Far Eastern conflicts. It is somewhat ironic that the pace of property development has slowed over the past two years because of the uncertainty created over the negotiations between Britain and China over the future of Hong Kong after 1997. This hiatus has resulted in the site of the historic Repulse Bay Hotel, which was demolished in the expansion boom in 1982, still remaining undeveloped today — a piece of history swept away for no good reason. The pace of the post-war boom in Hong Kong has meant that by 1977 it was estimated that over 90 per cent of the buildings in the city had been built since 1945 and over the last few years many prominent landmarks standing during the battle — the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank, the Hong Kong Club, the Kowloon-Canton railway station, the Central Post Office — have all been swept away.

Fortunately the two buildings where the surrenders of Hong Kong — one British, one Japanese — were signed still remain: the Peninsula Hotel in Kowloon and Government House on the Island itself. The Palladian-style Peninsula Hotel, quickly captured by the Japanese, became the headquarters of General Sano for the remainder of the battle and in 1945, being the then-largest and spectacular symbol of stability, became the headquarters for the British Task Force when it arrived at the end of August 1945. It was then the turn of the Japanese commander, under house arrest in the hotel, to negotiate the formal terms of surrender which were signed at Government House on September 16. The latter building was, ironically, built by a Japanese engineer of the South Manchurian Railway to replace an unsafe structure erected in the 1850s.

Once outside the built-up areas however, one can still pinpoint many of the locations of the various batteries and strongpoints although there is no declared policy to preserve any of these sites or structures. The official definition of a building of historic significance, according to the Chairman of the Antiquities Board, is one which has been erected and occupied for a very long time and which has played a significant role in the life of the community. If this definition ruled out the Repulse Bay Hotel, then overgrown lumps

of reinforced concrete on a remote hillside stand no chance.

The Shingmun Redoubt — the lynch-pin of the defence in the New Territories — is now part of a country park used by picnickers with a fence around it to keep out the over-curious. On the Island itself, Pinewood, a static anti-aircraft battery above the University, is now a neat, tidy complex of concrete barbecue pits, and a litter-strewn path, the original road used to take the guns up circa 1908, now leads up Mount Davis to the 9.2-inch coastal



After the British surrender the Japanese had a huge war memorial constructed overlooking Magazine Gap Road. In 1946 it was demolished but the base still forms the foundation to blocks of flats.



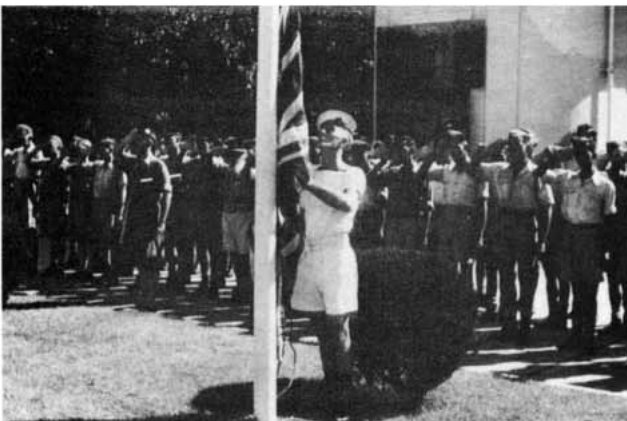


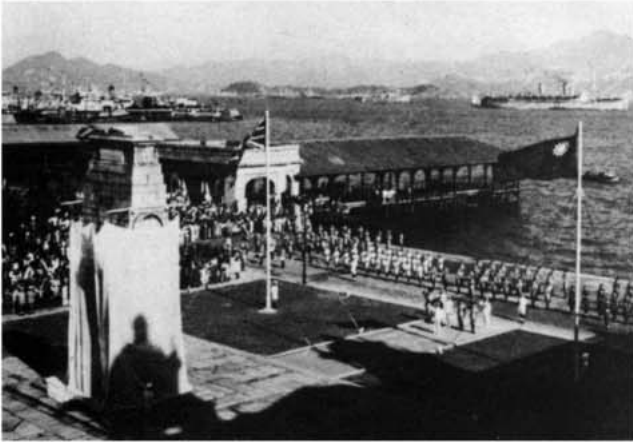
The actual Japanese surrender was signed at Government House in the Central District. Above: Keith Robinson of Government Information Services and a Government House official kindly take the place of the arriving Chinese delegation. Right: The parade prepares for the raising of the Union Jack. (IWM)

defence batteries at its summit where what structures survived the heavy shelling remain covered in graffiti. Overlooking the Lye Mun Channel other bunkers — once manned by the machine gunners of the Middlesex Regiment — now have their weapon slits sealed up with rusty corrugated iron and make substantial dwellings for squatters who prefer a solitary existence on the sea shore.

Nevertheless the search for the past, military or civil, is a difficult task in Hong Kong. Apart from buildings being demolished and street scenes completely changing, many of the battlefield locations are in 'protected areas' with entry forbidden to the casual tourist. Likewise the boundary with China and the barbed wire streets of Shataukok, where the Union Jack and the Rising Sun once confronted each other at the checkpoint, are also in a closed area.

Today Hong Kong stands at the crossroads of a new future. The prosperity of the post-war years, which has seen the British colony expand and rise to become the financial centre of the Far East, has been overshadowed by the approach of the termination of the lease of the New Territories from China, due to expire on June 30, 1997. Although Kowloon and the Island of Hong Kong itself are not subject to automatic relinquishment at the same time, having been ceded in perpetuity to Britain in 1842 under the Treaty of Nanking, the Chinese do not accept the validity of that treaty and the British view is that the Island itself would be untenable without the mainland which provides agricultural produce, water, and is the location of Hong Kong's airport. (In 1979 there was talk of building a new airport to replace Kai Tak on reclaimed land on a small island adjacent to Lantau, the largest of the Hong Kong Islands but also part



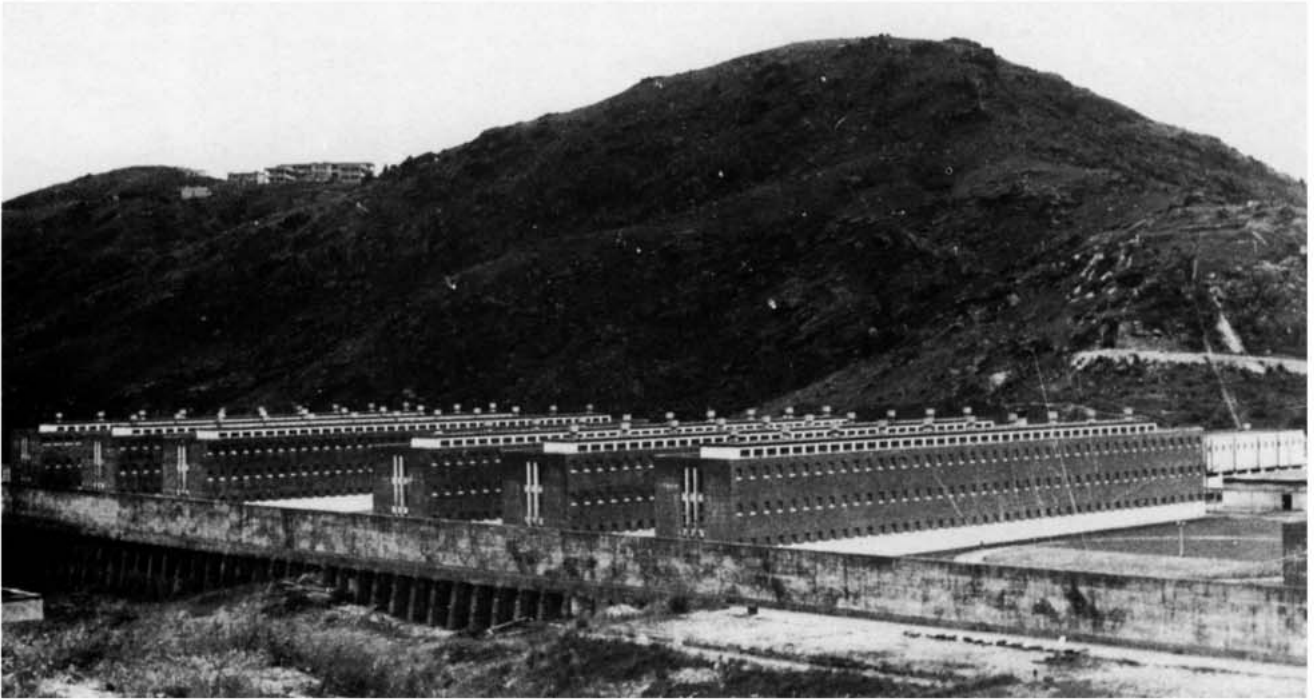


These photographs of the Liberation Day parade in 1945 at the Cenotaph — the British War memorial in Hong Kong erected after the First World War — provide further dramatic comparisons of the ruthless property development in the colony since the war.

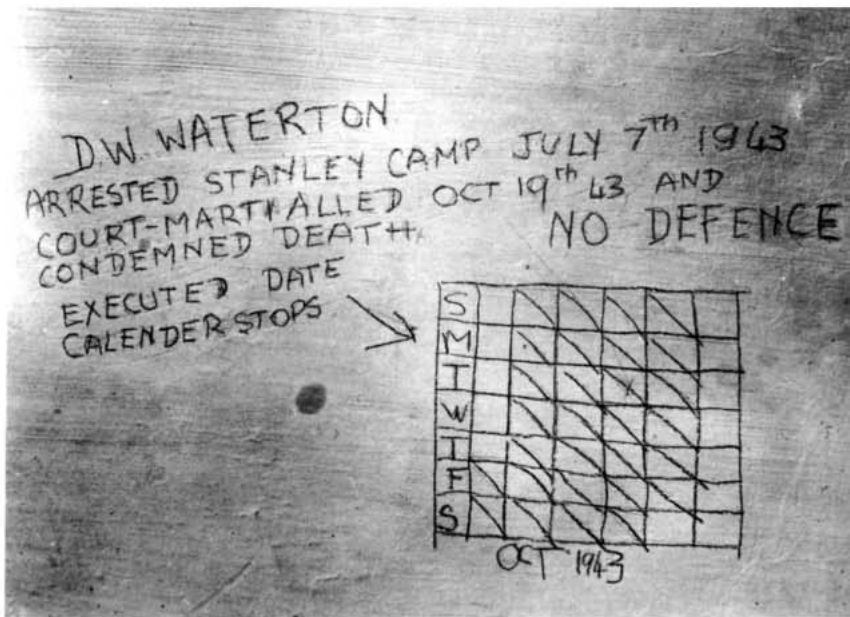
Top: In 1945 the memorial was right on the waterfront; now extensive land reclamation puts it some 400 yards inland with the huge Connaught Centre with its porthole windows towering fifty-six storeys above it.

Above and right: Even more striking is the view inland. This was taken from an upper floor of the Hong Kong Club, which was demolished in 1980 in spite of protests from conservationists, and is being replaced with a tower block. All the colonial-style buildings on the opposite side of the square have also been swept away, the site now occupied by the Prince's Building (left) and the Mandarin Hotel. (IWM)





British civilians captured in Hong Kong were incarcerated in Stanley Jail — turned into an internment camp by the Japanese.



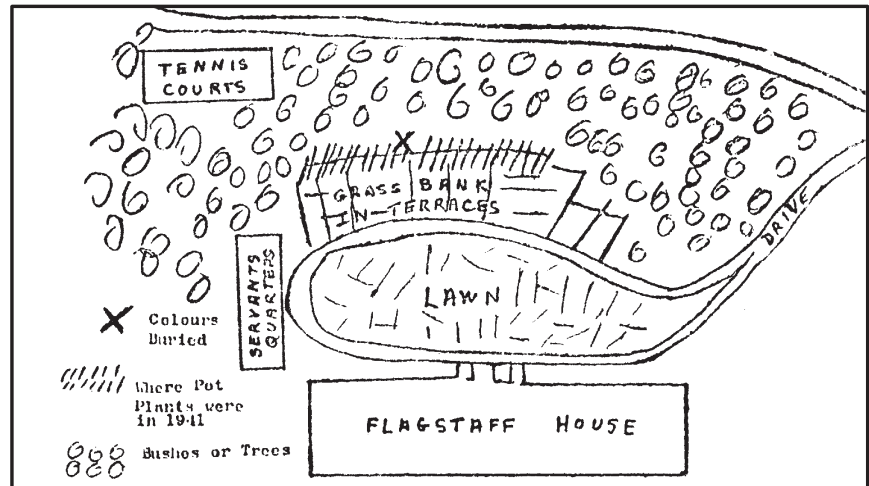
When the camp was liberated by the Civil Affairs Administrative unit under Rear Admiral C. H. J. Harcourt on August 30, this inscription was found on the wall of one of the cells. Douglas Waterman was a member of the British Army Aid Group which was created early in 1942 to encourage and facilitate escapes, to assist escapers and to get information and medical supplies into the camps. Attached to this military establishment was a large staff of civilians operating in an extensive area of enemy-held territory. Many members were arrested and executed by the Japanese and Douglas is believed to have been caught operating a wireless set. His grave lies alongside the prison in the old military cemetery which had not been used for seventy years. It was re-opened during the occupation specifically for the burial of those executed by the Japanese or who died while prisoners of war. (IWM)



Today the jail has reverted to its more formal use as a civilian prison.

of the New Territories' lease although this project was later dropped.) An interesting parallel is provided by the Portuguese enclave of Macao, forty miles away to the west across the Hsi Chang (Pearl River) estuary on the mainland of China, which is Portuguese national territory. Following the Portuguese revolution in 1974, the new Portuguese government actually tried to persuade the Chinese to take over the colony, with its notorious reputation for gambling and gold smugglers, but without success although it has recently been stated that when Hong Kong goes so will Macao. As we go to press the Chinese and British Governments, former allies in the war against Japan, have concluded their formal negotiations and have agreed a framework for the colony's future. One hundred years of history has come full circle; as the memories of the battle fade into the history books one thing is sure: Hong Kong will not look back but forward to its future.

One of the most fascinating 'after the battle' aspects of the fall of Hong Kong has been the search for the Colours of the 1st Middlesex and 2/14 Punjabis. Lieutenant Ian MacGregor, ADC to General Maltby, explains: 'The night of the day immediately following the Garrison's surrender General Maltby and I took the Colours of the 1st Middlesex and 2/14 Punjabis and buried them in the grounds of Flagstaff House. The time was about midnight and the house and grounds were being regularly patrolled by the Kempei Tai. Although it was a very dark night, we were therefore unable to use torches and had to work completely in the dark, diving for cover every time a patrol went by. We also had to work in complete silence. We had no tin box in the house sufficiently large to take both sets of Colours. All we could do was to wrap them in oil paper, put them in a wooden case, pad them round with masses of newspaper, and hope for the best. The complete burial operation took the General and myself working with a couple of garden spades in very hard soil about an hour and a quarter. When we returned to the house, the general made two very rough plans of the "burial site", one of which he kept and one of which I think was later given to Monkey Stewart and handed by him before his removal to Japan to Major Frank Hedgecoe of the Middlesex. A few days after I was released in 1945, Hedgecoe asked me to accompany him to Flagstaff House and help him to recover the Colours. At that spot originally there had been several rows of pot plants standing in pots on a flat bank above the drive to the south of the house, and it was under one row that the Colours were buried at a depth I should say of over three feet. Hedgecoe and I found that the site was almost unrecognisable. The pot plants had gone, and the whole area was completely overgrown with weeds and undergrowth. There was no sign of any digging or of the ground having been disturbed in any way for several years. We dug over the site after clearing all the undergrowth for about three hours, but we did not find the Colours. The next day Hedgecoe went back again with another Middlesex officer, but all their efforts again met with no success. We therefore decided that one of two things had happened. Either the General and I had been spotted burying the box by the Kempei Tai or Chinese fifth columnists who were infesting the place at the time, and the box had later been recovered by the Japs and the Colours captured or the whole box had simply disintegrated with



its contents over the four years which had subsequently elapsed. The first alternative was highly unlikely. If the Japs had found the Colours they would have made a big thing of it and given it a lot of publicity. Whenever they managed to capture anything like that, the news was always given in the Japanese English language newspaper which we saw every day. Nothing of the sort appeared. I understand that Japanese Intelligence Officers and other Japanese were closely questioned by our Intelligence and knew nothing of the Colours. There was also no sign of them ever having been on display or in the keeping of the Japanese War Museum, where they would undoubtedly have gone had they been found by the Japs. The second alternative is therefore far the more likely. No Jap in any case could have resisted jeering triumphantly over the capture of the Colours to the officers of both regiments while they were PoWs. This never happened. The only other possibility was that owing to the entirely changed nature of the whole site, and my memory not being too hot, Hedgecoe and I were digging in the wrong place. I understand however that several further attempts were later made to find the Colours over a wider area without success, especially in General Mathews' time. The whole of this story was the subject of several reports by both General Maltby and myself to various authorities and to the colonels of both Regiments.'



Several other searches have been made to locate the remains of at least the metal elements of the Colours, the latest and last in September 1978 by the Queen's Gurkha Engineers with metal detectors prior to the relinquishment of Flagstaff House when the British Army HQ was transferred to a new purpose-built building on the waterfront.



Flagstaff House is now a museum of Chinese porcelain and a popular venue for newly-weds to have their photographs taken.



January 16, 1946. Two commandos, Sergeant E. L. Oakes and Sergeant Richard Searle leave Murray Barracks in the centre of town. Demolished in 1982, this is the site in 1984. (IWM)



Old Hong Kong. Graham Campbell who took our present day photographs managed to find at least one comparison with little change. Our two commandos pause outside a gaily decorated theatre in Wing Lok Street. (IWM)



Is nothing sacred? Graham pictured the demise of the Hong Kong Cricket Club ground, part of which is now the Chater Garden. (See page 13 for new location.) The Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank behind was demolished in 1981 — its replacement going up on the right in the present day photo is reputedly the most expensive building in the world. (IWM)



The legacy of Hong Kong. The destruction on Magazine Gap Road in 1945 contrasts with the prosperity of 1984. (IWM)









Enthusiasts are of two minds over the preservation of armoured relics lying in situ forty years after the end of hostilities. One school of thought is that they should be recovered, restored and preserved in a museum, the other being that unless they are models of a particular rarity or significance, it is more interesting to see them remaining in their original settings, accepting the fact that deterioration by vandals and the weather is inevitable. [Such is the case of the Sherman M4A3 at Magoster, Belgium, featured on the cover of issue No. 4 — ten years later it remains to be seen at the side of the road — its latest status being included in our new book published this month *Battle of the Bulge — Then and Now. The Ardennes contain the most prolific number of battlefield relics — guns and armour — to be seen in Europe today, with some seventeen anti-tank guns and ten tanks forming a reminder of the fighting in this corner of Belgium. Editor.*]

In issue No. 35 the fact was publicised that a Churchill Mk II was still lying in a derelict state in Stainburn Gate Forest near Harrogate, Yorkshire. Brian King, who supplied the photograph, particularly asked that its location be given, as he was concerned lest it suffer the same fate as the Matilda on Rainham Marshes (issues 6 and 25) and be removed or scrapped. Rightly or wrongly the Churchill has now been recovered by the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers for eventual restoration and display at the Museum of Army Transport at Beverley.

The early history of this particular tank is not recorded although it is certain that this Churchill Mk II once belonged to C Squadron, 9th Battalion, Royal Tank Regiment, and became bogged down in what is now Stainburn Moor Forest sometime in 1941, this unit having moved to Otley, North Yorkshire, in May of that year. Here, they

The Churchill Mk II is uncovered completely for the first time in forty-three years. (Bob Grundy)

CHURCHILL RECOVERY

BY BOB GRUNDY

received the first Churchill tanks, testing and becoming familiar with them over the next few months. After its demise, the Churchill remained in the same spot for 43 years, surviving the attentions of numerous souvenir hunters, and the Forestry Commission, who planted the present forest of Spruce trees 25 to 30 years ago.

On June 2, 1984, a team from 123 Platoon, commanded by Captain Simon Elliot (based in Newcastle) of 124 Recovery Company REME(V), commanded by Lieutenant-Colonel J. P. Watson, arrived on the scene.

The plan was to dig away all the earth from around the tank to allow it to turn through ninety degrees for the 75-metre pull, by two Leyland 6×6 Heavy Recovery Vehicles (FV 1119), to the track running alongside the forest. This first manoeuvre was completed with ease, despite the early morning rain. However, it was after repositioning one of the Leylands on the track for the 1,000-metre tow to the main road that the problems began. To





Above: Phase two of the operation begins as the 40-ton monster is eased from its lair into the light of day (below). This is one



of the 5,640 Churchills produced which replaced the Matilda from 1941 on. (Bob Grundy)

facilitate this part of the operation, the Churchill had to be turned again, through ninety degrees, to face the correct way up the track. Needless to say, the tank would not move; instead, when the winch was started, the Leyland was dragged backwards towards the Churchill! The unit's Caterpillar D6 Dozer was then linked to the Leyland by a towbar to act as an anchor but this too failed, with both vehicles moving backwards down the track. It was then decided to try and free the tracks on the Churchill by severing the drive couplings with oxy-acetylene cutting equipment, all to no avail — the tracks were locked solid. Finally, the oldest vehicle in the company, a Scammel 6×6 Medium Recovery Vehicle (FV 11301) was brought to bear by reversing it the 1,000 metres down the track. After connecting its winch cable the long haul by brute force to the road commenced, the half-way mark being reached by 7.30 p.m. It took another five hours on Sunday, June 3 for the Churchill to reach the main road.

The loading of the tank onto a transporter, supplied by 105 Plant Squadron RE(V) at South Shields, had been entrusted to a Regular Army unit over the following week. Unfortunately they also ran into difficulties and 124 Recovery Company had to be recalled to finish the job on June 16 and 17, the operation being supervised by Staff Sergeant Pollington. This time, as the Churchill was winched up onto the transporter, the tracks got a good purchase on the ramps, and suddenly turned for the first time since 1941. Despite a puncture on the transporter, 124 Company arrived at the Museum of Army Transport by lunchtime on Sunday.



Upon arrival, a Coles 45-50 crane, supplied free of charge by Stoneledge Plant Hire, hoisted the Churchill off the trailer, and a little prodding with a stout pole helped to place the tank in the desired position.

Due to the fact that there are two other tanks in the yard awaiting extensive restor-

ation work — a Charioteer recovered from Shoeburyness and a Crusader Mk I from Larkhill — the Churchill will be the last in the queue. As this is a military transport museum, all the tanks (including a Comet) are to be eventually displayed as loads on various vehicles, waggons and transporters.



With the first part of the pull carried out successfully, the tank was swung through ninety degrees to face down the main



track. However the Leyland proved unable to drag the Churchill with its tracks locked fast. (Bob Grundy)



Problems, problems. With the Churchill refusing to budge, the Caterpillar is brought up to exert additional muscle although to



no avail. The drive couplings were then cut through to free the tracks. (Philip Cordingley)



At long last the Churchill reposes safely on the Leyland/Scammell Crusader on Sunday morning, June 17, 1984. (Bob Grundy)



Final positioning at the Museum of Army Transport, Beverley, where the Churchill will undergo full restoration. (Bob Grundy)



ADVERSARIES MEET AGAIN

BY GORDON RAMSEY

Late in 1944 the French Army captured several hundred thousand German war photographs in a building in Strasbourg in eastern France. These were passed on to the picture and film archive of the French Army which in November 1946 was located in Fort d'Ivry, south of Paris. Since 1969 the archive has identified with the picture credit: ECP Armées. The collection consists of around 12,500 photographs dating from the First World War period with an additional 13,500 glass negatives; 90,000 pictures of French origin covering World War II, 127,000 on Indo-China and 176,000 taken in Algeria. To date some 119,000 of the captured German WWII photographs have been made available although, like the Bundesarchiv material at Koblenz, they are devoid of captions making the search for specific subject matter difficult yet, on the other hand, sometimes very rewarding. About 35,000 pictures feature the German Army, 38,000 the Kriegsmarine, 40,000 the Luftwaffe and 6,000 the Afrika Korps.

It was while researching photographs at Fort d'Ivry that our French investigator, Jean Paul Pallud, came across a series of unidentified photographs showing a shot down RAF Sergeant Pilot standing beside his crashed Spitfire with his German captors. Luckily, one frame on the roll showed a slip of paper which informed the Air Ministry in England that a C. Howard Squire had been shot down in France and was safe. It was dated February 1941 and it was this piece of evidence that was to lead us to uncover the full story which lay behind this remarkable set of photographs.

Investigations at the Air Historical Branch in London provided more information; namely that on February 26, 1941, whilst on their first offensive sweep, No. 54 Squadron,

based at Hornchurch, was involved in mopping-up operations after twelve Blenheims had bombed Calais docks. No. 54 Squadron in fact acted as cover for No. 64 Squadron in the sweep from Dover to Calais. The station Operations Record Book stated that whilst experiencing heavy anti-aircraft fire over Calais, Sergeant Squire, flying Spitfire P7443, had baled out off the French coast, apparently hit by flak. This, as we shall see, was not quite correct. We then asked the RAF Records Branch at Barnwood, Gloucestershire to forward a letter to the last known address of Sergeant Squire. After forty years,

addresses on personnel records are notoriously out of date and it is now a very hit or miss method of tracing ex-servicemen. However, this time we struck lucky and within days the Editor was speaking on the telephone to the ex-Spitfire pilot who was both surprised and at the same time somewhat reluctant to publicise an incident of which he was not particularly proud. We explained the historical interest of the photographs and Mr Squire was persuaded to fill in the missing details.



Originally uncaptioned photographs from the ECPA Armées archive. Top: Sergeant Howard Squire of No. 54 Squadron and above his adversary Hauptmann Herbert Ihlefeld, commander of Jagdgeschwader 77.



What follows is an account of what really happened, based on Howard Squire's recollections of that day which are, incidentally, very clear and concise, regarding an event which befell many young men of many nations during the last war. On the day in question, he was not, in fact, scheduled to fly, although he did attend the briefing in the morning. After pilots had lunched in their respective messes, the truck arrived to take them to the dispersal point. Howard Squire caught the truck just as

The crash site lay just a few hundred yards east of the moated ramparts built around Calais following the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. During the battle for Calais in May 1940, Bastion 2 — the nearest part of the defences to where the Spitfire landed — had been defended by the Queen Victoria Rifles manning the battlements; today it lies alongside the approach road to the Calais hoverport.

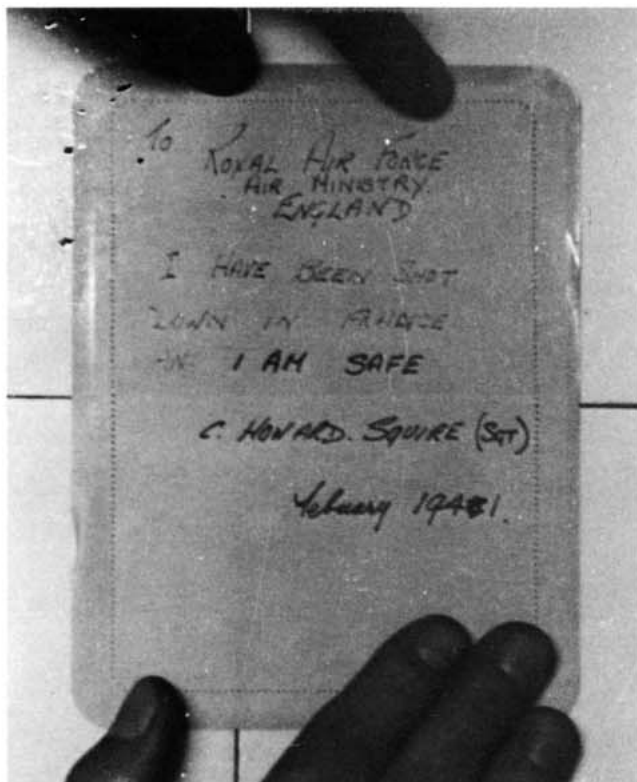
it was pulling away in order to see his fellow pilots off and to await their return at dispersal. Upon arrival, either someone was missing, or Spitfire P7443 (a MkII code-letter E) became available and, to Sergeant Squire's

delight, he was paired with Flying Officer Chapman as his No. 2. Whilst the others had been through the ritual of clearing their pockets and were wearing the customary revolver, this did not apply to our Volunteer

YEAR 1941	AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT										MULTI-ENGINE AIRCRAFT										TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD	TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD		
	Type	No.				DAY	Hour	Min	Sec	Alt	Speed	Eng	Alt	Speed	Eng	Alt	Speed	Eng	Alt	Speed	Eng	Alt							
FEB	1	SPITFIRE	A	SELF	—	TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD	64-50	132-66	40	2-50																3-50	12-50	4-20	
FEB	1	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	FORMATION NO. 2.		55"																					
FEB	2	SPITFIRE	D	SELF	—	SQUADRON FORMATION (2)		55"																					
FEB	2	SPITFIRE	L	SELF	—	SQUADRON FORMATION (2)		35"																					
FEB	3	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	FORMATION NO. 3.		35"																					
FEB	4	SPITFIRE	A	SELF	—	SQUADRON FORMATION		1-00																					
FEB	6	SPITFIRE	G	SELF	—	DUSK LANDINGS. (2)																							
FEB	6	SPITFIRE	G	SELF	—	SQUADRON FORMATION (3)		50																					
FEB	6	MAGISTER	P6344	SELF	—	FIRST SOLO ON TYPE.		40																					
FEB	6	MAGISTER	P6344	SELF	—	FIRST NIGHT SOLO. ^{LOCAL FIELD} ^{GENIX}																							
FEB	6	MAGISTER	P6344	SELF	—	NIGHT FLYING PRACTICE																							
FEB	9	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	BATTLE CAME TO 8000'		1-05																					
FEB	9	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	DUG FIGHTING.		55"																					
FEB	9	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	DUSK LANDINGS. (1)																							
FEB	10	SPITFIRE	G	SELF	—	AEROBATICS		35"																					
FEB	10	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	A.A. G.O.P. LEARNING.		35"																					
FEB	10	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	NIGHT CIRCUITS + LANDINGS ⁽³⁾																							
FEB	11	SPITFIRE	C	SELF	—	AEROBATICS		40																					
FEB	15	SPITFIRE	G	SELF	—	SQUADRON FORMATION		1-00																					
FEB	16	SPITFIRE	L	SELF	—	FORMATION NO. 3.		50																					
FEB	21	SPITFIRE	G	SELF	—	PATROL 2.		40																					
FEB	23	SPITFIRE II	E	SELF	—	PATROL		35"																					
FEB	24	SPITFIRE	E	"	—	OFFENSIVE PATROL (DIVERS COLOURS) GENIX		45"																					
GRAND TOTAL (Coln. (1) to (10))						218	0.																						
TOTALS CARRIED FORWARD						64-50	44-05	40	1-25																				
						64-50	44-05	40	1-25																				

The page for February 1941 in Howard Squire's log book records his last flight (entered by his Flight Commander, Flying

Officer Jack Charles). Flying Officer Charles's reference to observing a parachute out to sea remains unexplained.



The note that started it all. From this vital piece of evidence, included on the roll of 35mm film captured by the French army, we were able to piece together the story.



Spitfire P7443 became just another kill on the rudder of Hauptmann Ihlefeld's 'Emil', photographed here sometime later on the Eastern Front when his score stood at forty-six.

Reserve pilot (he had enlisted on September 13, 1939) who had no time to perform these checks, so sudden was the decision that he should fly.

Once airborne, the squadron formed up in 'finger fours' with sections line astern — only the second time that the squadron had flown in this formation. With 'B' Flight and the senior Flight Commander, Flight Lieutenant George Gribble, leading, followed by 'A' Flight, led by acting Flight Commander Flying Officer Jack Charles, with Sergeant Squire as last man on the right flank, the squadron was at once climbing over Kent, heading for Boulogne. With the sea invisible in the haze below, and because of enforced radio silence on the journey out, the first indication pilots had that they were approaching France was when they turned down sun for the run towards Calais and Dunkirk. Howard Squire was pleasantly surprised when the squadron did not encounter any flak which he had expected. Suddenly, however, things started to happen. A fast moving object up ahead rapidly crossed the squadron's path, passing from left to right. Instantly, Sergeant Squire thought 'decoy' to himself although no sound from the R/T was heard. No sooner had this thought flashed through the young sergeant's mind when Flying Officer Chapman, his No. 1, peeled off right to intercept. Hesitating for a split second, torn between avoiding the danger and obeying the rule of protecting his No. 1's tail, Sergeant Squire followed Chapman down. He had a brief glimpse of the machine ahead before he lost it. The visibility was good, but Sergeant Squire assumed that his No. 1 had passed through some light cloud. In fact, realising his mistake, Chapman had rejoined the squadron, leaving Sergeant Squire still going down looking for a No. 1 to protect. Within seconds he realised that he was alone and he swung round to rejoin the squadron. However the rest of his friends were nowhere to be seen and somewhat alarmed and conscious of the danger of remaining over a hostile shore alone, he did a turn up sun to check that he

would not be jumped by the notorious 'Hun in the sun'. Satisfied, Sergeant Squire headed back for home at full throttle, starting a weave to disconcert any would-be attacker.

Unfortunately, in spite of all his precautions, a 'hell of a bang' shook the entire airframe, shattering the port side of the forward canopy, the blind flying panel disintegrating before him. Noting 'red hot embers' gliding past on the starboard side, Howard Squire realised that he had indeed been 'jumped' by a skilful attacker. Rolling quickly, he pulled the stick back into his stomach and immediately blacked out. Recovering, Sergeant Squire remembers, was like awakening from a deep sleep; it seemed ages before he realised that the aircraft was in a steep, uncontrollable dive, the first thing registering being the rush of air across the broken canopy. Acting instinctively, he started an aileron turn and, seeing nothing behind him, he started to pull out. Another thump reverberated along the fuselage and, 'to add to the nightmare', the German was nowhere to be seen. Diving again, he pulled out without being attacked. The engine was now beginning to run very rough, and, sickeningly, came the realisation that he could not make the journey back to England. The added presence of Me 109s, which fired across his bows every time he turned for home seemed to indicate that a swift landing was necessary. On his first pass along the beach, just north of Calais, he noted a long, straight stretch of sand, but fearful of mines, he plumped for a flat piece of ground just inside the sea wall. Flying by the 'seat of his pants', with no air speed reading at all, he performed a left-hand circuit to bring himself in line with the chosen landing ground once again. With flaps down, the Spitfire sliced across the sand dunes, accompanied by the destructive sound of a crashing aircraft. Opening his eyes to a 'blessed silence', he swiftly jumped out from his aeroplane and moved forwards towards the sea wall while figures ran towards him. Suddenly, a shot was fired above his head and he ducked. As a soldier appeared round the

nose of P7443, Howard Squire raised his hands to be greeted with the customary 'for you the war is over'. His delighted captors escorted him over the dunes to a bunker set in the sea wall, asking him continually if he was a Canadian. Realising that he was covered in mud, due to the fact that he had landed on a patch of marshland rather than sand, Sergeant Squire demanded 'Wasser', one of the few German words he knew. Shortly, a bowl of water, towel and a bar of foul soap made from what appeared to be scented plasticine was procured and the dignity of the Royal Air Force was saved.

Within minutes, a Luftwaffe Unteroffizier arrived and escorted Howard Squire to a car, after the latter had wrested his flying gloves from the Army personnel, eager for souvenirs. Courteous and charming, the Unteroffizier inquired as to whether the Sergeant was unhurt, and also asked the number of his squadron. Upon receiving the answer 'Sgt. Squire 968401', he smiled and drove on to the officer's mess located just outside the perimeter of Calais-Marck airfield a short distance away. Upon arrival, he was greeted by the Intelligence Officer, speaking fluent English, who escorted him to the ante-room. Schnapps was produced, but it was not pressed in any way. Once again, his squadron number was requested and upon receipt of the same reply, the Intelligence Officer grinned and said: 'Of course you don't tell me — you are a soldier, ja?' Asked if he was hungry, Sergeant Squire said yes, as he had no idea of when he would eat again. Shortly, a huge platter of bread and sausage appeared, and the rest of the squadron sat round while he ate his way through half the meal. He remembers that they were all friendly and hospitable, asking questions such as where did he live, had he a girl, when would he become an officer, and so on. When the Intelligence Officer had translated the hope that he was unhurt it was only then that he discovered he had strained his wrist in the landing. It was therefore decided that the local doctor in Calais should be consulted. The Intelligence



A sad-faced Howard Squire looks at the Identification Friend or Foe equipment being removed which he was hoping to destroy.

Officer and an escort took him into Calais but, because the doctor's surgery was in a narrow part of the town, they had to walk the last part of the way. Wondering what the chances of escape were, he noticed that a number of the French civilians smiled and stuck their thumbs up, making him feel a little less lonely. Upon arrival, the doctor performed a heart and lungs check and he was allowed a wash in warm water, to remove the last stubborn remnants of the smelly marsh from his uniform.

Having been taken back to the aerodrome, he was taken to see a dispersal point in a farmyard, whereupon the party continued the short distance back to the crash site. Sergeant Squire hoped he would get an opportunity to destroy the IFF unit, which he had forgotten to do earlier in all the excitement, but unfortunately technicians were already removing the radio equipment. After numerous photographs had been taken, some no doubt finding their way into many personal photo-albums, they returned to the mess, where a row was brewing up between the non-English speaking victor of the combat and the local flak detachment, both of whom were claiming the victory. When the argument was translated to Howard Squire, he backed his handsome adversary — none other than the Commanding Officer of Jagdgeschwader 77, Hauptmann Herbert Ihlefeld. This view was upheld by the rest of the squadron.

Following numerous drinks and a friendly send off, Sergeant Squire was dispatched to what he presumed to be Group Headquarters at St Omer for the night. After a meal and courtesy of a somewhat more restrained sort, he spent rather a miserable night in a cold room, with the light on and two young Gefreiters on guard. The following day, after an abortive attempt to escape at Brussels station, he was en route for Dulag Luft at Oberursel near Frankfurt, where he was given the K. D. Luft. No. 515. Having been interrogated by Sonderführer Eberhardt (who spoke perfect English) for between five to six days, he was kept for three to four weeks in the nearby compound with about fifty others. He was then moved to Stalag Luft 1 at Barth in Pommern, where he remained for a year, before being transferred to Stalag Luft 3 at Sagan in Silesia in the spring of 1942. In 1943 he was moved again to Heydekrug in East Prussia (Stalag Luft 6), but when the Russians approached in August 1944, the prisoners were moved in cattle trucks to Thorn in Poland (Stalag 357). A month later, they moved again to Fallingbomel, north of Hanover, where he was released on April 26,



1945 by the 8th Hussars, 7th Armoured Division.

In December 1948 Howard Squire re-enlisted in the RAF Volunteer Reserve, flying Chipmunks and Tiger Moths at Castle Bromwich until the VR was disbanded in May 1953, leaving with the rank of Flying Officer.

Having received his account of this incident in February 1983, we obtained an aerial photograph from the Air Photo Library at Keele, showing the beach area north of Calais (now close to the hoverport), which had been taken just two weeks after the crash. Under a magnifying glass it was possible to discern the outline of a Spitfire, by the unmistakable elliptical wings, lying in the dunes a few yards from a track leading to the seafront. Armed with this and a set of the ECPA photographs we arranged a suitable date to rendezvous with Howard and his wife Shirley, when they returned from a holiday in France. What with the discovery of the late Pilot Officer Peter Cazenove's Mk I Spitfire almost intact on the Calais beach forty years after the event (see *After the Battle No. 32*) we did not know what to expect. However when we drove down the track, now metalled, leading to the sea, we came across a new road, running parallel to the beach, which serviced a few new factories on either side of it. Our flagging hopes were raised a little when we discovered a patch of flat sand in the right area, as indicated on the aerial photograph. Measuring the distance from the Spitfire to the track, and the distance from the bottom of this road to the crash site on the aerial picture, we then paced this out on the ground. This, however, put the wreck position right next to a brand new factory (ironically a British concern making washing machines), with about four feet of the Spitfire's port wing inside it! All the surrounding earth had been bulldozed away, and rusting 40-gallon drums leaking chemicals lay strewn about with gay abandon.

After taking photographs we then drove to try and establish the location of the farm dispersal that Howard had been shown by Luftwaffe officers forty-two years previously. Reaching the most likely group of buildings, as we drove through the courtyard, to Howard Squire's delight the scene had changed little except for the absence of the Luftwaffe of course.



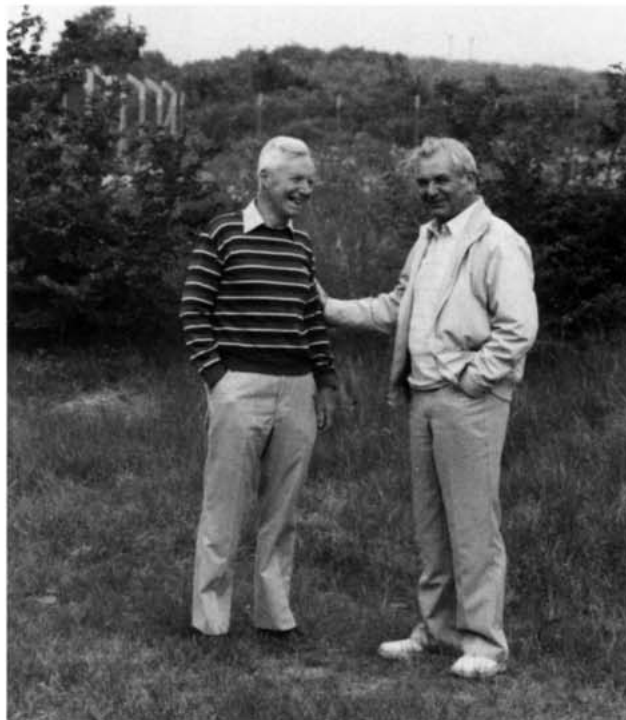
July 26, 1984. Today the site of the crash lies at the rear of this factory — the Editor points out the spot to Herbert Ihlefeld.

Hauptmann Ihlefeld also survived the war. In February 1941, as the Commanding Officer of Jagdgeschwader 77, he not only held the Spanish Cross in Gold but also the Knight's Cross he had received on September 13, 1940 from Adolf Hitler personally. Howard Squire's demise added another tally to his score which totalled forty on June 26, 1941, for which he received the Oakleaves to the award — the 16th to receive the honour. He went on to receive the Swords on April 24, 1942 for 101 victories (then the 9th holder of this award), and ended the war an Oberstleutnant with a score of 140.

When we returned to the UK we began enquiries to trace Herbert Ihlefeld and in December 1983 were delighted to receive a reply from him now living in Wennigsen near Hannover. He was very glad to see the photographs again as the copies he had once possessed, together with all his records and other documents, were taken from his flat

when Russian forces entered Berlin. Ex-Oberstleutnant Ihlefeld confirmed that he was the Commanding Officer of 1. Lehrgeschwader 2 (training squadron) at Calais-Marck from December 25, 1940 to March 29, 1941 flying the Me 109 at which time he had twenty-two victories over England, the English Channel and France.

Herr Ihlefeld frankly admitted he could no longer remember the precise details of his combat with this particular British pilot but he was very pleased to have the opportunity to make contact with his former enemy, as was Howard Squire. He then outlined brief details of his career in the Luftwaffe which began by his volunteering for flying training on April 1, 1933. From the spring to autumn of 1938 he flew as a fighter pilot with the Condor Legion in Spain, thus gaining valuable experience of aerial combat and achieving eight victories. Such operations were to benefit many German fliers in the war soon to come. He also shared



Same aviators on the same spot. Note the cannon shell damage to the port windscreen and canvas D-Type oxygen mask.

the fate of Howard Squire in being shot down — but in his case seven times, baling out once and being brought down in flames during a low-level mission over Yugoslavia on April 6, 1941, when he was wounded and made prisoner. After six weeks he was able to rejoin German forces and ended the war in command of Jagdgeschwader 1 flying the Me 162 jet fighter, and was captured at Leck by the British becoming a PoW for the second time. His end-of-war total of 140 confirmed victories places him thirty-sixth in the league table of German fighter aces.

And so, forty-two years later, appropriately on the seventy-fifth anniversary of Louis Blériot's first flight across the Channel, the two former adversaries met again on the site of the crash just north of Calais. It had taken considerable organisation to arrange the historic meeting, both having travelled from their respective homes especially for the event. At 10.30 a.m., on a sunny Wednesday morning, the emotional reunion took place, sealed with an exchange of gifts — a plaque depicting an Me 109 from Herbert Ihlefeld and a model of the Spitfire flown by Howard Squire in return. There is a saying that the affinity of fellow aviators extends beyond the borders of nationality and in this case it was certainly true as it seemed almost unimaginable that these two men, forty-two years ago, would have tried to kill each other had they met in the sky over Calais.

After having visited the crash site, our party then drove to the dispersal site at Calais-Marck aerodrome, where Howard Squire had been taken following his capture. This location was enthusiastically confirmed by Herbert Ihlefeld, who remembered clearly that the present barn had been used as a hanger in 1940-41. Herbert also revealed that this was the dumping ground for wrecked and written-off airframes on the airfield, sending your humble scribe and a frantic Peter Cornwell (one of the authors for our book, *The Battle of Britain — Then and Now*), off across the fields like a pair of anteaters in search of 'morsels of history'.

We also wanted to pinpoint the room where Howard had been offered a drink by the squadron and Herbert explained that this had been located in his headquarters — a wooden building. When we found the site it was obvious that the HQ had long since been demolished, the site being now the home of a herd of cattle, endowed with larger than usual horns. In spite of this minor problem, our comparison photographs were secured.

As can be expected with any old soldiers, numerous stories were exchanged, including one which moved Howard to the extreme. The note which he had written in February 1941 and which set us off on the whole investigation had in fact been delivered though not through the Red Cross, as would normally be expected, but by Herbert Ihlefeld personally risking his life to fly alone under the British radar screens on an overcast day to Croydon.



This farm building on the north side of Calais-Marck was formerly a German dispersal, the barn being used as a hangar.

In spite of heavy flak, he dropped the note in a tin box somewhere in the area — where it presumably must still lie to this day — ample proof that some degree of chivalry still existed over the skies of Europe in those early days of World War II.

The Fort d'Ivry photo archive is open to all members of the public. However permission has to be sought before any photographs can be ordered and this is best obtained before

visiting the archive. Write to Monsieur le Colonel Chef du SIRPA, 231 Boulevard Saint-Germain, 75007, Paris. You must state the reason for your interest, i.e. research, author, collector, etc. Once you have the reference numbers of the pictures required, these can be ordered by post from ECP Armées, Photothèque, Fort d'Ivry, 75998 Paris Armées, but only if you send a copy of your permission with the order.



Herbert Ihlefeld shows the way to his former headquarters on the opposite side of the aerodrome — not far from the present post-war terminal building. The original concrete service road remains but the buildings do not; this is the same spot where the former adversaries sipped champagne in 1941!

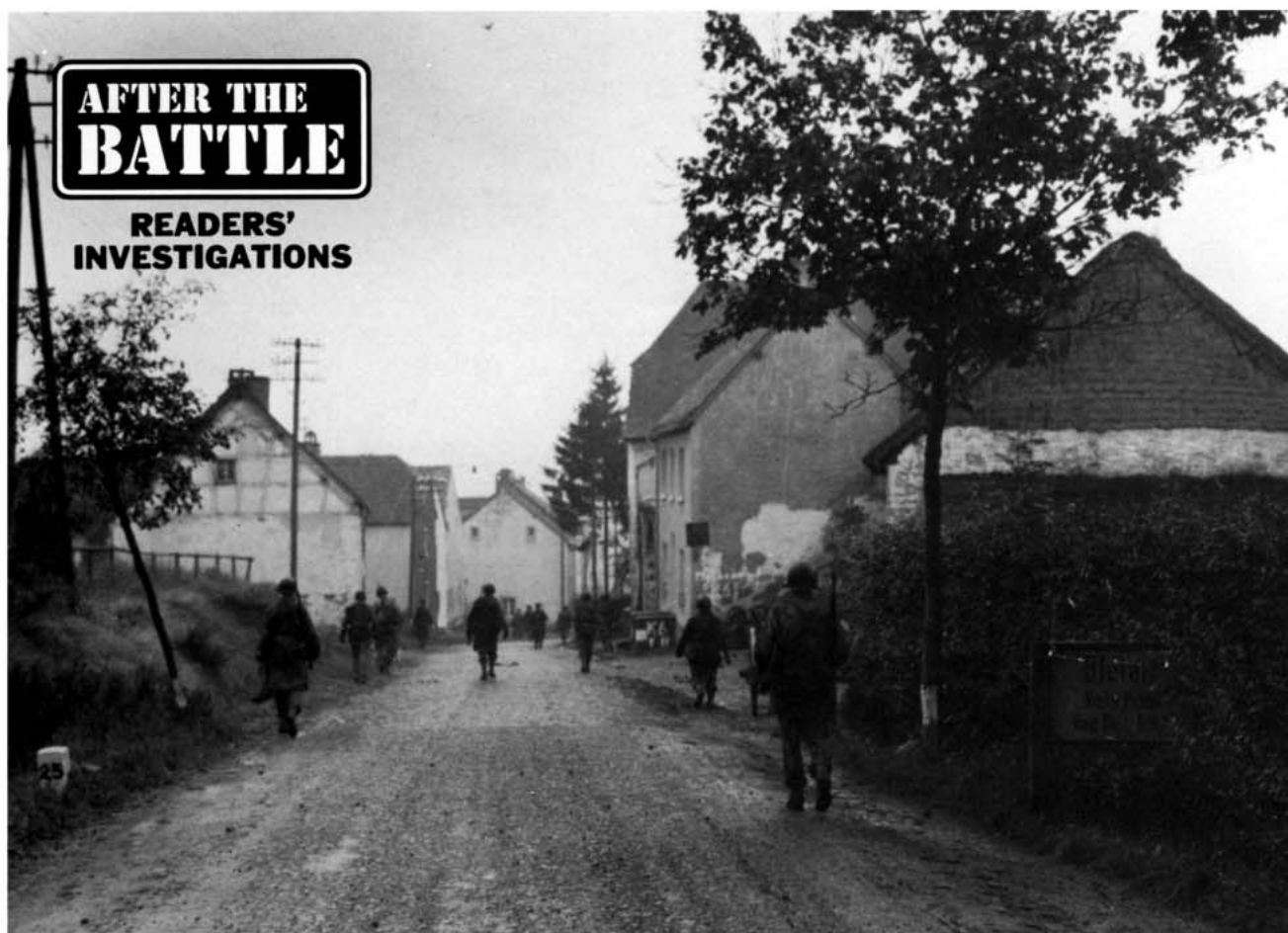




Two historic groups pose for a final photograph, separated by a time gap of forty-three years. L-R the Editor with his No. 2;

Herbert Ihlefeld and Frau Ursula Ihlefeld; Peter Cornwell; Miss Elaine, interpreter; Mrs Shirley Squire and Howard Squire.





THE DRIVE ON PRÜM

FEBRUARY 1945

BY PROFESSOR FRANK T. EDWARDS

Two years ago, while developing a course in military history in support of the Reserve Officer Training Corps curriculum on my campus at California State College, I began constructing several class assignments emphasizing the role of the combat team in World War II based on the 4th Infantry Division's operations around Prüm in February-March 1945. I joined A Company, 8th Regiment, as a rifle replacement just as the division's initial drive on Prüm was halted, transferring to D company at the end of the final advance across the Prüm River in March. This article is based principally upon the extensive operational records in the US National Archives, unit histories, and interviews with former German and American participants in those events.

I recently returned to the battlefield where I was able to seek out many of the locations depicted in the contemporary photographs with the help of Klaus Ritter, then an 18-year-old volunteer (the same age as myself) in the 18th Volks-Grenadier-Division, who had been wounded on December 21, 1944 while sheltering from American mortar fire. By the time I entered the Prüm conflict, Herr Ritter was convalescing at his home in Weinsheim, right in the centre of the battlefield.

After the 4th Division's advance across France from Normandy, where it had lost the greater part of its original complement of riflemen, by the middle of September the division had crossed the German frontier, had penetrated the Siegfried Line with little opposition and was advancing on Prüm when its



Top: The 4th Division enters Bleialf on September 14, 1944 in the form of the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Infantry Regiment. These early September battles were to mark the 4th Division's first attempt to capture Prüm. (All contemporary pictures US Army)
Above: The same street, unchanged in spite of the prolonged fighting around it.

forward companies were routed with heavy losses, leaving their dead to molder in the shadow of the Schnee Eifel. In November the 4th was committed to the bloody Hürtgen Forest where it suffered grievously in repeated futile attempts to make a decisive penetration of the West Wall. In December, a few days after arriving in a 'quiet' sector north of Luxembourg City, the understrength division again suffered substantial casualties as it fought to defend that vital point from the advancing left wing of the German Ardennes Offensive. Late in January a partly recovered division had pushed stubbornly defending Germans back against their own frontier and was once again advancing up into the West Wall fortifications along the Schnee Eifel.

The initial attack into the Siegfried Line along the Schnee Eifel on the night of February 3-4 in a snowstorm (driving snow and sleet according to the 'old' men of my company who spearheaded that assault) saw initially confused and ineffectual resistance resulting in an irreversible breakthrough in the enemy defenses. Aside from a strong German counter-attack in Brandscheid — the Verdun of the Eifel — with the loss of half of the 3rd Battalion, 22nd Regiment, there was little effective opposition along the Eifel Ridge. During the subsequent week of increasingly determined resistance from the remnants of several Volks-Grenadier divisions and the 2nd Panzer Division, General Harold Blakely, commander of the attacking 4th, committed all of his regiments to capture Prüm, heretofore an important rail and road center, now gateway (according to General Patton's hopes) of an armored thrust that would take the Third Army all the way to the Rhine. The undermanned enemy battalions fought desperately against a determined attacker. The American strength lay in a battle-tested, experienced division superior in numbers and equipment and able to place constant pressure on its opponent. German strength lay in the terrain and weather which allowed for only intermittent use by the Americans of their superior tactical airpower. The division's zone of action was characterized by narrow ravine-like valleys together with successive ridges, both wooded and exposed, where dug-in tanks or self-propelled guns and automatic weapons could take advantage of every fold in the ground, or in the thick-walled farmhouses of the little villages scattered along the winding roads that funnelled into Prüm.

On February 10 the village of Tafel on the edge of Prüm was reduced to rubble and occupied by 1st Battalion, 22nd Regiment, after repulsing a strong German counter-attack. On the same day resistance on the Kalverienberg, a prominent hill mass over-



Professor Frank T. Edwards in 1944 when a Private 1st Class.



Unteroffizieranwärter (aspirant NCO) Klaus Ritter, 293 Volks-Grenadier-Rgt.



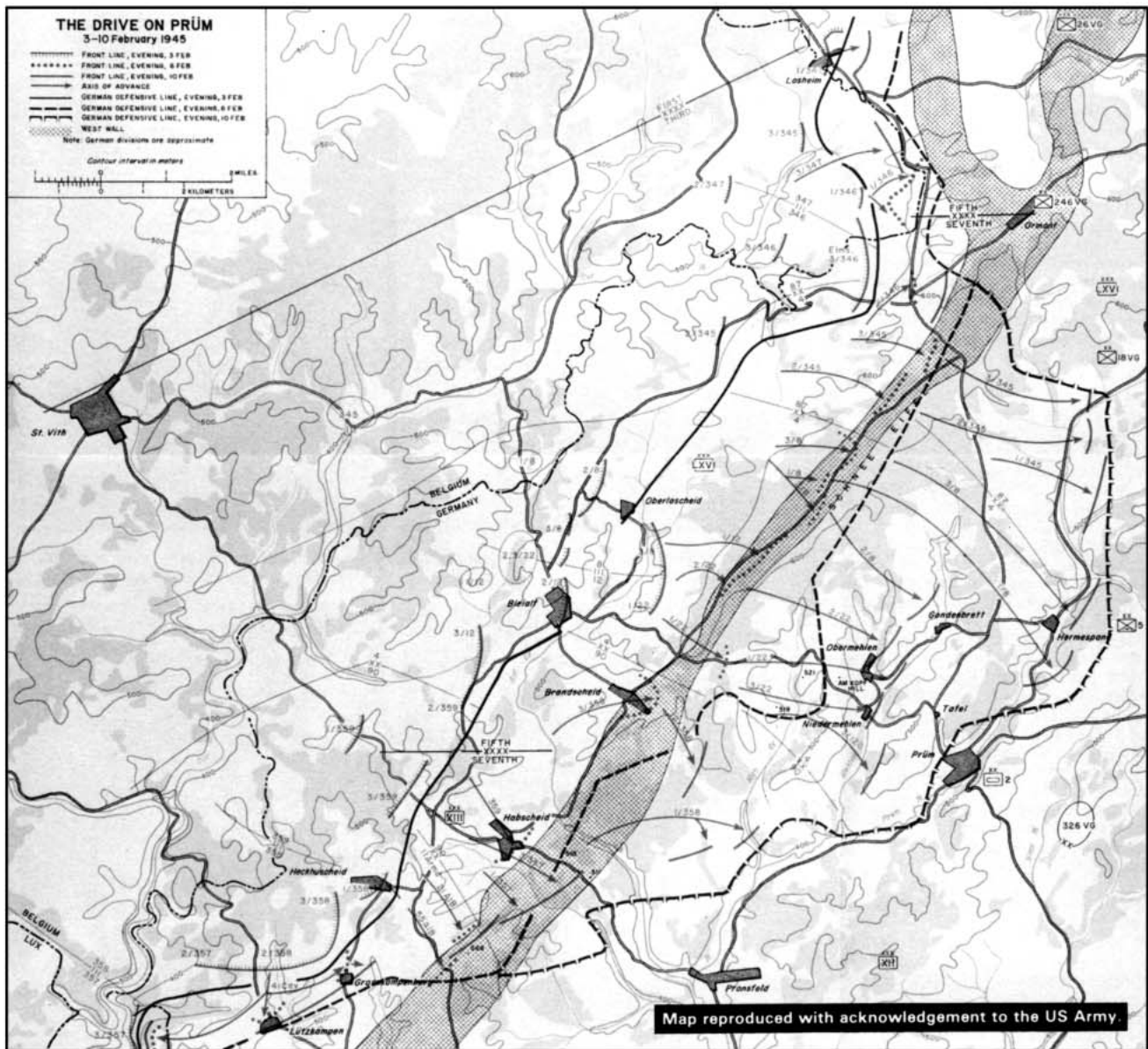
The author with Klaus Ritter and their wives. Both Herr Ritter and his wife, Elizabeth, are natives of nearby Weinsheim, in the center of the battlefield.



Brandscheid, to the west of Prüm, was a hotly contested town, the scene of much bitter fighting as this picture shows, taken



on February 10, four days after a German counter-attack. It is difficult to imagine such scenes today.



looking Prüm, was overcome by a combined tank-infantry attack of 3rd Battalion. On both flanks 12th and 8th Regiments reached the Prüm River, units of the latter occupying dominating ground on the east bank of that key feature on February 11. The command decision to withdraw back to the west bank, based on urgent logistical as well as strategic considerations, subjected front line units to

constant harassment from enemy positions on the dominating wooded ridge extending for several miles along the west bank of the Prüm River. Local counter-attacks, rocket concentrations, direct fire weapons and infiltration even into the city itself characterized this period. In addition to these difficulties the general deterioration of the health of the men in forward positions due to continuing winter

weather and supply shortages remained a matter of concern at all levels of command. The condition of B Company of the 22nd Regiment on being relieved under fire soon after the capture of Prüm was described in division records as 'pitiful'. Even as replacements began to arrive in the middle of February the presence of trench-foot and intestinal disorders remained widespread.



'Victory or Bolshevik chaos?' exclaims the sign above the entrance to Bleialf station, now a private house.



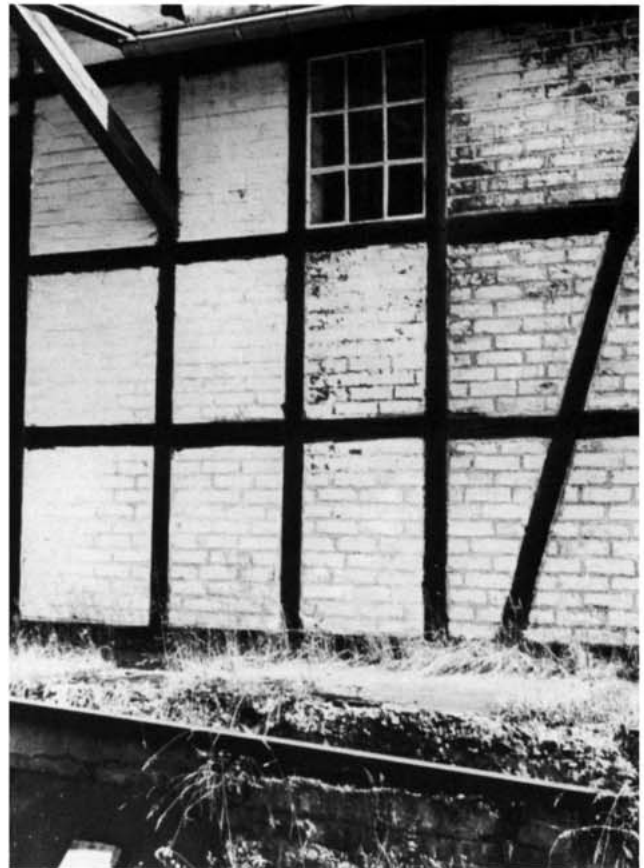
Again taken at Bleialf station (this time on the platform) this picture shows Captain Gilman H. Haven treating Corporal Steve Brier assisted by Technician Fifth Grade George Turnbull

(My own recollection of this problem during the operation across the Prüm River at the end of the month is of men running across fire breaks with flux staining their pants-legs.)

By February 24 preparations for the coming operation were accelerated. Extensive reconnaissance by scout and combat patrols, artillery spotter aircraft and fire demonstrations confirmed prior American estimates of German defense along the Prüm. During

the two weeks the 4th remained at rest, the enemy had constructed a shallow trench system along the division front from Dausfeld north to the division boundary with the 87th Division near Kleinlangenfeld. These defenses were protected by minefields as well as machine guns located to command the most likely approaches. South of Dausfeld the steep wooded terrain rising directly above the city of Prüm was defended by scattered bunkers and

machine guns. Back-up defenses for this entire system, varying in depth and formidability, consisted of strong points located on several dominating hills and in villages where the well-built farmhouses provided both cover and concealment for SP guns and automatic weapons. Despite the forbidding nature of this terrain confronting the division, nowhere along the front of its main attacking force was the depth of the defense greater than



during a lull in the fighting on February 15. Note foot-powered drill. Today, both German State Railways and US Army dentists have left for good, the station now standing derelict.



Men (and woman) of the 4th Infantry Division participate in a Catholic Mass in Bleialf church on February 24, four days before the division renewed its advance. According to the caption, the nurse and medical orderly were from a nearby field



hospital. Spent and live rifle cartridges lie on the floor — ample evidence of the recent fighting around the church. When the present-day comparison was taken the pews had been altered to face the apse.

one thousand metres. Nor was it anticipated according to credible intelligence estimates that these defenses would be adequately manned. Aside from the wreckage of various units surviving from the initial American offensive in February, the main German defense force was the 5th Parachute Division, hardly more than a group of two thousand recently recruited teenagers and their officer cadre together with some hastily attached artillery, rocket batteries and other support units. This division was now to be sacrificed for the last time on the altar of Hitler's bankrupt cause. Reorganized the previous September around unneeded Luftwaffe personnel to spearhead the Ardennes Offensive, it had suffered cruelly first in the attack, and then during a professionally dubious pattern of unnecessarily delayed withdrawals in January executed by a high command heedless of an almost total lack of adequate food, blankets or winter clothing. The same spirit of ruthlessness would seem to have continued to animate the leadership of the 5th during the final battle for Prüm. According to an American G-2 report Major General Ludwig Heilmann, the division's commander, was alleged to have stated that he would prefer a truckload of dog-tags rather than surrender at that stage of the war.

On February 28 at 0515 hours the 8th and 22nd Regiments launched an attack across the Prüm River in coordination with similar forward movements of the 87th and 90th Divisions on their northern and southern flanks respectively. The division attack plan had been for the 22nd Regiment to break through the thin enemy-held line around the town of Dausfeld just north of Prüm while the 8th Regiment was to secure wooded high ground along the left flank of the main thrust. Once sufficient progress had been made by both regiments, the 12th Regiment in Prüm could be committed directly in front of the city to widen the bridgehead and to prepare the way for the 11th Armored Division to begin its attack along the open valley beginning just a few hundred metres beyond the river and extending north-east toward the Rhine.



During February, the supply problem became so bad, due to impassable roads, that the 4th Division had to call for airdrops which went in north of Bleialf. Today's comparison was taken on the opposite side of the road due to increased vegetation blocking the immediate view.



In preparation for the renewed offensive on Prüm, these men clean their weapons in Brandscheid. Owned during the war by



Johan Hoffman, Brandscheid's blacksmith, the now-rebuilt house is lived in by his eldest daughter.



A rifle platoon of the 12th Infantry Regiment's 1st Battalion marches through Sellerich, on its way to nearby assembly



areas on the first day of the renewed offensive on Prüm. Today it is difficult to imagine this area as once being a battlefield.



M7 Priest and M4 Sherman of the 70th Tank Battalion pause in Wirbelscheid on February 28 as they prepare to go into action in



support of the drive on Prüm. Wirbelscheid is the epitome of the post-war 'German Miracle'.

Although deep penetrations had been made by both regiments at the end of the first day of battle, losses had been substantial and the unseasoned young paratroopers continued to fight with reckless fury even when further resistance was obviously hopeless. Imbued with a strong sense of patriotism in defense of their native soil, as well as the continued vain hope that somehow the Führer might still bring forth a secret weapon, these soldiers, many no more than sixteen years old, continued to hold the American attackers at bay, both from the prepared positions in front of Prüm as well as along the wooded high ground on the left flank of the main attacking force where rugged terrain was covered with thick stands of spruce and laced by deep, brush-filled ravines.

Even on the third day of the offensive, as the 2nd and 3rd Battalions of the 22nd Regiment gained control of the high ground in their sector and the 1st Battalion of that regiment began advancing eastward along the main valley road (the modern highway 410), the unanticipated extent of enemy resistance remained a factor to be reckoned with. From the village of Weinsheim on the left flank German anti-tank fire hit in rapid succession several supporting tanks. This forward movement was also being contested from a cluster of stone farm buildings scattered along highway 410 called Brühlborn. As the 22nd Regiment's 1st Battalion deployed against the town it was subjected not only to heavy small arms fire from that point but by machine gun and mortar fire from high ground on both sides of the road. On the right flank a pillbox was located at the top of a wooded ridge designated the Kramberg, and from an entrenched position on a hill closer to the road to the left the enemy was able to place very effective automatic weapons and mortar fire on Red Battalion as it moved toward Brühlborn. By the end of the day, after continuous fighting at close quarters, the Americans had been unable to clear all of the defending Germans from this hamlet and both sides settled in for an uneasy night, prepared to resume the contest on the morrow.



German prisoners from the 5th Parachute Division transport an American casualty across the weir at the Dausfeld Mill seen in the background. Heavy fighting took place around the mill on the 28th. The rebuilt bridge spans an unchanged scene.



Members of the 22nd Infantry Regiment marching down the Tiergartenstrasse into the main square of Prüm. The Hotel Goldenen Stern and the Adler Chemist on the left, together with



the post office, still function on their original sites. Even though Prüm itself had fallen, it was not until March that the surrounding pockets of resistance were eliminated.

A more pervasive obstacle to the division's continued advance lay in its northern sector where the 8th Regiment was experiencing similar unanticipated difficulties in clearing the rugged, heavily wooded high ground along the left flank of the 22nd Regiment as well as the flank of the prospective advance of the 11th Armored Division. The village of Weinsheim was an important part of that problem. From the southern edge of that town, from a schoolyard and group of farm buildings behind the village church, German forces consisting of the 2nd Battery, 11th Assault Gun Brigade, commanded by Lieutenant Martin Kauschmann in support of the 15th Parachute Regiment, could interdict the American line of advance along highway 410 to well beyond Brühlborn. Moreover these guns had checked for the past three days the advance of 8th Regiment's 2nd Battalion from along the wooded ridge overlooking the village.

In the early morning mist on February 28, Companies E, F and G, had attacked across the Prüm-Gerolstein railroad tracks to mop up the thinly held Haupt Line between Hermesland and Willwerath and to capture the village of Weinsheim nestling below the far side of the high wooded ridge behind the German trenches. These companies were commanded by Lieutenant Colonel George Mabry, a young officer whose aggressive ability was legend throughout a regiment that had experienced during the previous winter some of the most difficult combat in the European theater. By midday all three companies had reached their initial objectives at the top of the ridge overlooking Weinsheim though not without determined resistance. At this juncture bypassed German defenders, acting singly and in small groups, began a series of random counter-attacks firing at the Americans from all sides in the thick fir woods that mantled the area. The pattern of combat

which followed during the next four days has been characterized by a member of F Company who had experienced the rigors of the Hürtgen Forest, as 'tooth and nail stuff'. The resisting paratroopers, fighting tenaciously and recklessly along steep-sided ravines and from their dugouts in 2nd Battalion's rear area, had to be systematically mopped up under a canopy of low lying fir trees. In the meantime the battalion's several attempts to get into Weinsheim were easily discouraged by automatic weapons' fire and Lieutenant Kauschmann's SP guns covering the several hundred yards of open pasture that lay between the attacking Americans and the edge of town. By the afternoon of March 2, E and F Companies had not yet tied in with G, that unit still fighting to consolidate its position around the dominating Hill 627. General Blakeley, the 4th's commander, responding to pressures from as high as Third Army headquarters to get the main advance



This group of GIs pictured on March 1 are most likely from a company headquarters group. Behind them, members of the



12th Infantry Regiment move off towards the river to complete mopping up operations on the east bank.



Camouflaged 11th Armoured Division anti-aircraft guns in position in what is now the town square car park.



A typical scene in Prüm of the destruction wrought to capture the town. This is the remains of the post office which was rebuilt on the same spot after the war. The reason why so few



photographs were taken on this date, February 16, is that the ridge overlooking the town visible behind the church spires was then still in enemy hands.



Photographed on March 8, this is the rather sorry looking remains of Prüm railway station — bearing mute testimony to



the effects of heavy bombing raids once its importance as a regional rail centre behind the West Wall was appreciated.



These photographs, *above and below*, graphically convey the conditions of house-to-house fighting in Prüm. Taken around the bank on Tiergartenstrasse, they are unlikely to be posed as

the weather depicted confirms regimental reports for February 14, the date on which these pictures were taken: 'Clear, with moderate temperatures and good visibility.'



Two Third Army corporals stand amidst a cache of Nazi flags scattered in the rubble of the Prüm NSDAP office. The district

leader, Dr Walther Muller, was a local dentist who had held his post ever since 1933.



Above: Men of the US 4th Division cross the main square in front of the 18th century Baroque Salvator Church. *Below:* Today the restored basilica remains unchanged in its outward appearance, down to the smallest detail. This is all the more remarkable when it is considered that after the war, during the American occupation, a munitions explosion completely

shattered the building. On the right of the wartime photograph is the memorial to the fallen of World War I. Moved during the post-war renovation of the square, it now broodingly overlooks the Wendelsplatz, near the Town Hall, some distance to the north of its original site.





Elements from Combat Command B of the 11th Armoured Division roll through Prüm's deserted streets on their way to support sweeps to eliminate resistance in surrounding villages

on March 3. The contrast of present-day Germany where every effort has been made to eliminate any vestige or reminder of the war.



rolling, extended 22nd Regiment's zone of action to include Weinsheim and using 2nd and 3rd Battalions, to eliminate that troublesome point on the morning of March 3.

During the previous three days, as 2nd and 3rd Battalions fought to obtain control of Dausfeld and the several prominent hills covering that strong point, the presence of enemy forces in Weinsheim had become increasingly evident to the Americans. Even from as far back to the capture of Prüm at mid-month, SP guns in the vicinity of Weinsheim had subjected US positions in the city and along the river to intermittent harassing fire. On the evening of March 1, Leutnant Kauschmann, with two guns and a small protective force of infantry, counter-attacked to momentarily block the forward movement of 22nd Regiment from along the high ground above Dausfeld.

A source of increasing embarrassment to Leutnant Kauschmann was the presence of 106 civilian men, women and children who had returned to their native village in order to protect as best they could what remained of their homes and livestock. Indeed, in the basement of the village schoolhouse which was being used as the battery command post, two daughters of the local schoolmaster Herr Nikolaus Molitor had taken refuge from the incessant rain of shells the little town was now receiving. On March 2 a platoon of American tanks occupied a defilade position on a small hill 600 metres in front of the schoolhouse from which they subjected that area to continuous direct fire. Weinsheim's location and its obvious use as a base for the defense of



Task Force Chico of the 11th Armoured Division awaiting orders to advance through Weinsheim, hidden by the M10 tank destroyer on the left. Several hours earlier on March 3 the 22nd Infantry Regiment's 2nd and 3rd Battalions had cleared the

town. In the tranquil scene today, cattle graze undisturbed in the meadows to the south of Weinsheim. The church and school (hidden by trees), focus of so much of the 4th Division's efforts, bask in the summer sun on the left.

this troublesome sector made it a prime military objective for the Americans. It was with mixed feelings that the young battery commander received orders from his superior, Colonel Groeschke, 15th Parachute Regiment CO, near Gondelsheim, to withdraw to that town on the evening of March 2. At that time the bürgermeister was instructed to prepare white flags together with appropriate printed signs and to post them on the edge of the village facing the impending attack. Early the following morning, as 1st Battalion resumed the contest in Brühlborn, both 2nd and 3rd Battalions together with tanks of the 11th Armored Division, in a formidable display of strength, advanced on Weinsheim only to encounter relieved civilians waiting the end of their long ordeal.

With the fall of Weinsheim a combat command of the 11th Armored Division massed in the pasture on the edge of the village waiting orders to advance onto the broad open valley in a coordinated attack with the other combat command of the division

moving up from Prüm along a recently cleared road in front of the city. At noon the former task force, accompanied by 22nd Regiment's 2nd Battalion, began an attack from Weinsheim aimed at clearing the ridge lines on both sides of highway 410 while the 1st Battalion, together with tanks of the other combat command, pushed out from Brühlborn. Several prominent defensive features were the objectives of this coordinated thrust: Brühlborn and the Kramberg (regimental objectives No. 12 and No. 8) were to be completely cleared of the enemy by 1st Battalion while 2nd Battalion and its accompanying armor was to take the Niesenberg, an isolated hill mass south-west of Weinsheim (objective No. 5) and the village of Baselt at the far edge of a mile-long piece of woods bordering highway 410 (objectives No. 6 and No. 10 respectively).

The present mayor of Weinsheim, Dr Georg Klasges, then a boy of twelve, watched this movement from the vantage point of his native village where the Niesenberg is easily visible.

As the left flank of 2nd Battalion approached the base of that terrain feature, an enemy machine gun concealed in the scrub along its crest opened fire catching the approaching Americans in the open and inflicting heavy casualties. Leutnant Kauschmann, who had withdrawn his battery to Gondelsheim directly behind the Niesenberg, witnessed the same incident: Americans desperately trying to find cover until accompanying tanks could extinguish the enemy position. This resistance only briefly interrupted the advance and by the end of the afternoon both sides of the valley road well beyond Baselt were in American hands.

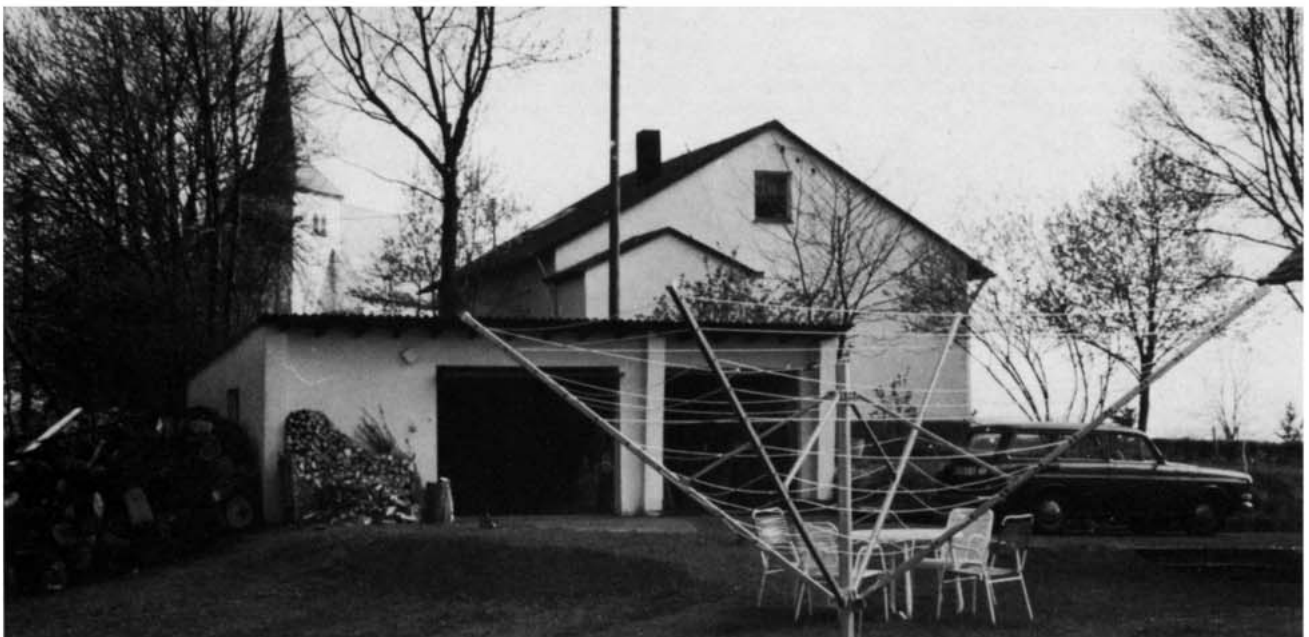
One obstacle still impeded the 11th Armored's forward movement: the village of Gondelsheim and a broad belt of extremely rugged, heavily wooded ground extending from Kleinlangenfeld on the division's northern sector, along the left flank of the 11th's projected route. Part of this area lay behind Weinsheim and after 8th Regiment's 1st Battalion cleared a dominant wooded peak





The 22nd Regiment's 2nd Battalion push over the Dausfeld road in Weinsheim. From the schoolhouse cellar, behind the M10,

Leutnant Kauschmann had his battery command post. Today the schoolhouse has been completely rebuilt.





Mid-afternoon shadows fall along the western side of the Niesenberg while this 2nd Battalion soldier turns his efforts toward the completion of the ever-necessary foxhole. No



longer can the rise and fall of straining tank motors be heard today, only the occasional rhythmic pulsing of tractors cutting summer crops. Weinsheim lies on the skyline.



The results of the German ambush recalled by Weinsheim's present-day mayor Dr Georg Klasges, as well as Leutnant Martin Kauschmann, on March 3 as the 2nd Battalion advanced



across the open ground in front of the Niesenberg. While the soldier on the stretcher receives attention from a combat medic, his comrade lying beside him is beyond help.

known locally as the Burgring, it was to assist 2nd Battalion in the Weinsheim woods in mopping up the enemy between them. Additionally, 1st Battalion was to clear a stretch of road from Willwerath where it makes a hairpin turn and continues on to Gondelsheim in a narrow valley formed from the intersection of the Burgring and the lower part of the hill mass around Weinsheim. However, instead of the two battalions being closely tied in as intended to mop up a trapped, demoralized enemy, each unit was in fact widely spread through several miles of densely wooded hills facing small but difficult to pin down groups of Germans. Throughout March 2 and 3, A, B and C Companies of the 1st Battalion were only partly successful in clearing their respective zones of action of the enemy which until midnight of March 2 had been able to block an intended tank-infantry attack to clear the valley road and Gondelsheim.

Early in the morning of March 3 as Weinsheim was being occupied by 22nd Regiment, the 8th's B Company on foot and

half-tracks together with two companies of the division's supporting 70th Tank Battalion, were repulsed from Gondelsheim with severe tank losses by three guns of Leutnant Kauschmann's battery. A subsequent attack by dismounted infantry had failed and late in the afternoon A and C Companies were driven back in some confusion by interlocking machine gun fire located on the wooded high ground above Gondelsheim. Throughout the night all three companies attempted to gain their objectives but it was not until mid-morning of March 4, after the village and high ground dominating it had been thoroughly smoked, that all resistance in this sector was finally overcome. B Company entered the shattered little village to find the enemy had withdrawn early in the morning leaving behind one of their dead, one wounded paratrooper and a medic. A and C Companies, after a brief fire-fight, captured the shabby unpainted little hunting lodge that had served as headquarters for the 15th Parachute Regiment. The handful of dead from that engagement, two Americans and three

Germans, were laid side by side in front of the battered two storey cottage, the obscenities of death covered by blankets of the fallen.

So ended the battle for Prüm, marked by the destruction of the Fifth Parachute Division and the tragic, futile deaths of many of its young members as well as the deaths of young Americans who needed no promise of secret weapons but only the reasonable hope that they would soon be able to end their continued daily gamble with death. Although for several days the 22nd Regiment continued to encounter determined resistance, the division's mission was essentially accomplished; 11th Armored tanks rolled largely unopposed toward the Rhine and Operation Lumberjack, of which the preceding events were a part, became history.

The battle won, a 4th Division infantryman reads Eisenhower's proclamation of victory to the citizens of Budesheim near Weinsheim. Note the generation gap — only the young and veterans of earlier wars are present.





GUNNERS TURN THE CLOCK BACK

BY NIGEL SARGEANT

Mons, 7.00 a.m., August 22, 1914. The first shot of the 'War to end Wars' rang out just east of this Belgian mining town, fired by Corporal E. Thomas as 'C' Squadron of the 4th Royal Irish Dragoon Guards encountered German cavalry — the 4th Kuirassiers — between the villages of Casteau and Signes. Captain C. Hornby, sword raised, led the first charge. At nearby Obourg, riflemen of the 4th Battalion, the Middlesex Regiment, opened up on the oncoming Germans with fantastic rifle fire — their skill with the Lee Enfield enabling them to fire 16 aimed shots per minute, some even more, so that the Germans thought that every battalion was equipped with many machine guns instead of the pitifully few they actually possessed. To the right

of them, guns of the Royal Horse Artillery commenced firing from the fields amidst the slag heaps littering the vicinity of Péronnes.

A small stone now marks the site where 'E' Battery fired the first shell of the First World War at the Battle of Mons — the fields having since become part of the grounds of a spark plug factory — and on August 22 of this year members of today's 'E' Battery, 1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, travelled there from their base in Germany to commemorate the unit's historic part in the opening stages of the fighting.

In a short but moving ceremony watched by scores of villagers and factory workers, many of whom remembered a previous commemoration in 1965, members of the Battery

formed a Sword Guard to pay their respects to their forbears; then, seventy years almost to the minute, an ancient but highly polished 13 pounder field-gun fired a single blank round close to the original position.

Fifteen years ago the original gun-crew witnessed the ceremony but since then the years have caught up and only their memory could be honoured on a balmy August day in 1984 when only the giant slag heaps served as a reminder of the grim events of that day in 1914 when they were used by hard-pressed troops on both sides as defensive positions. In a speech given at the parade in both English



Top: The 1984 gun team from 'E' Battery, the Royal Horse Artillery, form up on the same spot from which the first shell of WWI was fired. The plaque commemorating this action stands

in the foreground with the Champion spark plug factory, which owns the site, behind. (Sergeant Phil Cadman) *Above:* The original 'E' Battery in action in France late 1914. (IWM)



Above: Two 13 pounder field-guns are fired in St James's Park on February 3, 1928 to commemorate the original action. (IWM)

and French the Battery Commander, Major Philip Cottam, recounted the Battery's first engagement in which it was acting in support of the 16th Lancers who were part of the screen formed by the Cavalry Division commanded by General Allenby. With classic British understatement the Battery War Diary hardly reflects the drama of the day's events: 'Engaged guns and infantry causing loss. Some enemy shell fire. Lost one horse during redeployment.' However, local sources paint a more colourful picture, stating that six Uhlans, Germany's crack cavalry soldiers, advanced towards the British Tommies while concealed behind a farmer's cart. Inconsiderately the farmer turned into his farmyard and the Germans were spotted, but one survived to return to his own line and reveal the British positions. 'E' Battery then took part in the resulting barrage as both sides opened fire.

Guest of honour at the parade was the Mayor of Binche-Péronnes, Monsieur Armand Leroi, who met the gun-crew from 'D' Sub Section — No. 4 crew's modern-day equivalents — all clad in First World War uniforms, and inspected the prized firepiece. He then stood back as they swiftly took up positions in an unfamiliar but well-rehearsed gun-drill that was second nature to their predecessors. With traffic halted, smoke poured from the barrel as the blast echoed across the fields — for a few seconds helping to put the clock back seventy years. 'A chance in a million and a great honour' was the unanimous opinion of the four-man gun-crew picked for the proud duty, Sergeant Lester Fitzgerald, Bombardier Robert Brassington, and Gunners Andrew Baxter and Ian Dixon-Smith.

Accompanied by Major Cottam, Captain Mark Williams, the Battery's second-in-command, and Battery Sergeant Major Alan Parker, the Mayor also inspected the resplendent Sword Guard and met members of the Battery. Later, the mayor, and the Personnel Manager of Champion Europe in whose grounds the commemorative stone lies, Jean Pierre Revel, and Major André de Smet of the Belgian Army who acted as interpreter, were hosted to lunch by members of the Battery with whom they exchanged plaques and a picture of 'E' Battery. After that, it was back to the present and to their base at Hohne in Germany for the successors of those members of the 'contemptible little army' of 1914.



Above: Taken on November 4, 1959, this picture shows three original members of the gun-crew, with the actual gun used in the action, now displayed in the Imperial War Museum in London. The crew are from left to right: R. W. Ryder, F. Dougherty and W. W. Bird. (IWM) Below: The 1984 gun crew. Left to right: Gunners Ian Dixon-Smith and Andrew Baxter, Bombardier Robert Brassington and Sergeant Lester Fitzgerald. (Sergeant Phil Cadman)



